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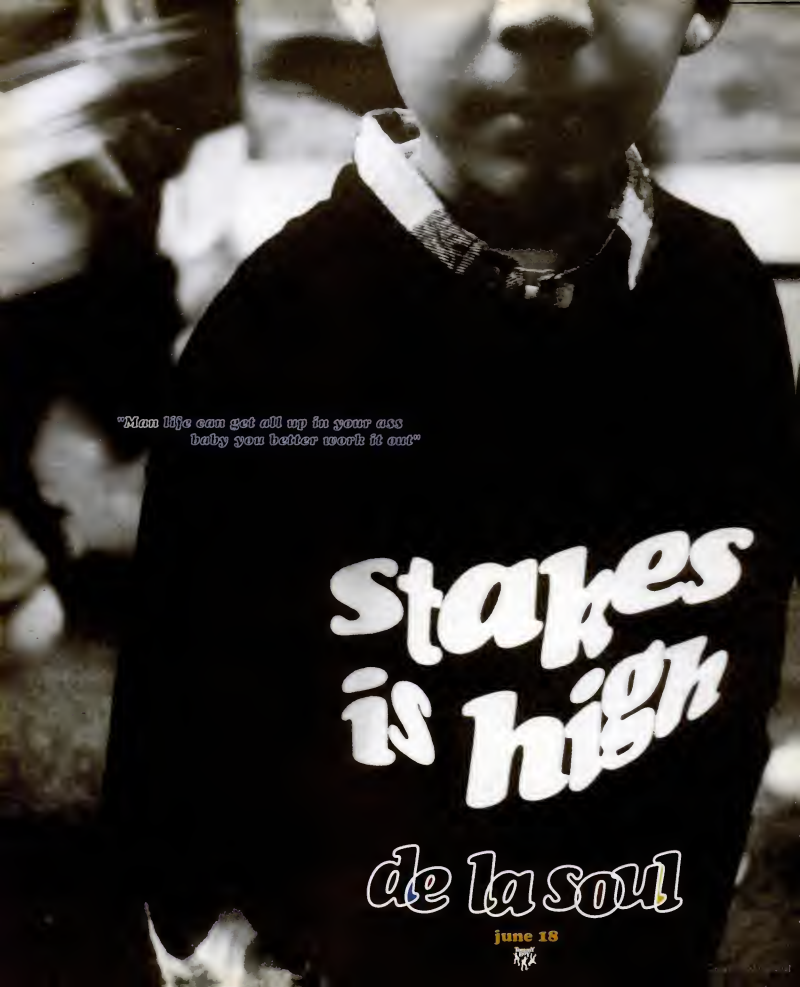


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This basketball great has labored in near obscurity. But with the Olympics looming and an American professional women's league forming, that's about to change. By *Omoroké Idowu*

ON THE COVER AND RIGHT

The Fugees photographed by Melodie McDaniel; styling by Agnes Baddou at Flex; hair by Veronica Fletcher; makeup by Roxanna Floyd at Susan/Zoli. Wyclef: Black-and-silver hat, stylist's own; white cotton button-down, stylist's own; drawstring cargo pant by Industria; Wallabees by Clarks. Lauryn: Pink cotton tank by Diesel; khaki suede miniskirt by Kenneth Richards; sandals, stylist's own. Pras: Yellow safari shirt by Paul Smith; white crewneck tank by Industria; black warm-up pant by Nike; Rod Laver sneakers by Adidas; sunglasses by Black Flys



Get in touch with your masculine side.





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hip-hop computer art.

The Blackspotlight

Justice is served on a bimonthly basis by die-hard rap columnist the Blackspot.

ABOVE

Wyclef of the Fugees photographed by Mpozzi Tolbert



YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN AFRICA WHEN EVEN THE HERBIVORES ARE CARNIVORES.

Few topics can get a couple of Tanzanians arguing faster than that of which animal is the fiercest. "The black rhinoceros!" one will exclaim. "The mighty lion!" another will counter. This exchange will go on for quite some time, until a third person will chime in with "the malarial mosquito" and send everyone back to square one. While you could wait an eternity (or longer) for a winning beast to emerge, the easiest way to avoid local emergency rooms is to simply take the following few precautions . . .



AFRICA

Technically, a herbivore eats plants and a carnivore eats meat. But in Africa, what animal has time to split hairs? "Plant, schmant...that fellow in khaki looks pretty tasty!" In all honesty, you'd be best off simply avoiding conflict with either.

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(fill in the blank: hippos, elephants, baboons, etc.) who will do you great bodily harm should you get between them and their offspring.

Lastly, regardless of how hot the African sun gets, resist at all times the temptation to cool off in the lakes and streams you may encounter during your travels. We'd hate to lose a prospective

customer to a crocodile or, even worse, a hippo. (Which is, incidentally, the fiercest animal of them all.)



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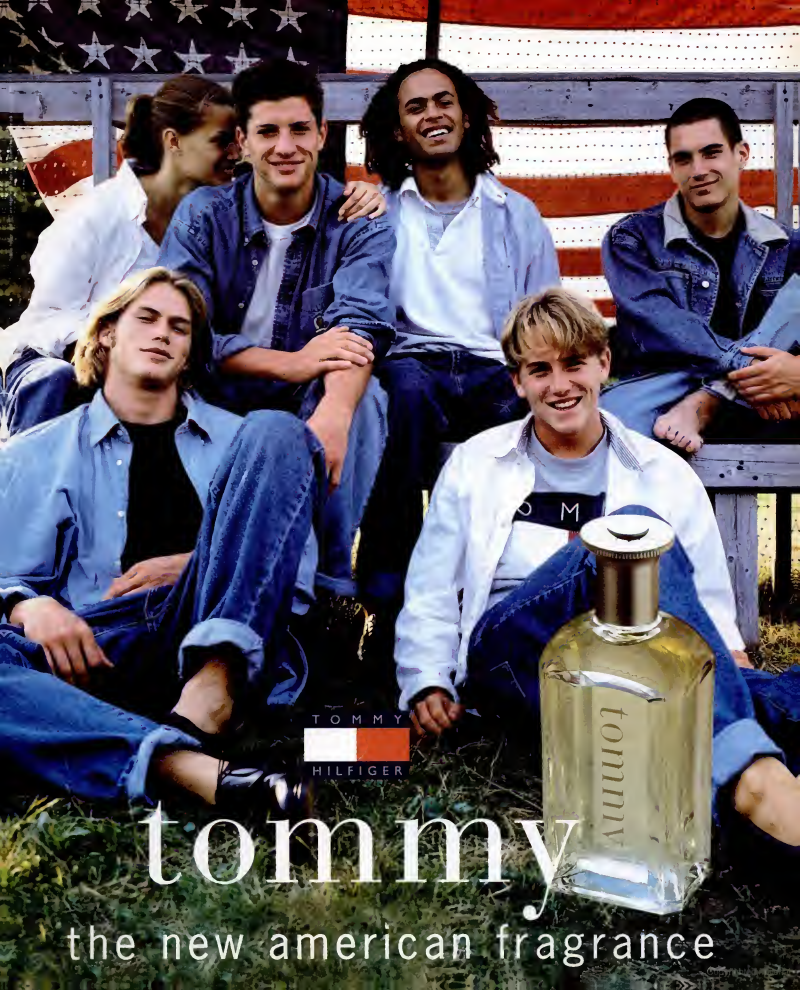
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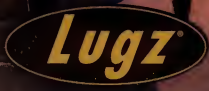
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Ruthless to the Bone, these boys are flowing with 2 nominations apiece for the American Music Awards and the Grammys, and for Album Of The Year on the Soul Train Music Awards. Bone Thugs-N-Harmony deserve the has-est treatment on the front. Straight out of Cleveland with their first EP over 4x platinum, the follow-up full-length is reaching 3x platinum. Easy-E would be pleased.

Flip the map to Compton, home of the legendary Easy-E with his latest release, "Suck O' The Streets Of Muthaph**in Compton." It's a shame this young man isn't here in the physical to represent, but he lives forever in the hearts of the true hip hop generation. West, east, north and south. Easy-E lives.

Representing Compton and L.A. is The Villain In Black, MC Ren, dropping the bomb 1441 once again. This is real MC Ren "NWA" style hit 'em with raw dog right between the eyes. Point blank you can't front on Ren, he's rating a 10 with tracks like "Mad Scientist", "Keep It Real" and "Mind Blown" that perps will be banging in the streets. The video takes you into the mind of a mad scientist that'll about his grip so don't trip. In addition to 3 merciless albums exploding from the Ruthless Family Mafia, the Ruthless/Relativity common dropped a bomb on L.A. with fall-out spreading nationwide, "Smile Now, Die Later," the new album from Ice Cube.

Sittin' "On Top Of The World," Eighball & MJG have a gold album under their belt. Next up, "Listen To Me Now" off the forthcoming Red Hot Rap Against Ash compilation. Suave House and Relativity are straight up platinum bangers. Coming South Circle's Mr. Mike. Rumor has it Suave may be the next Death Row on the block.

Fat Joe has blessed the nation with his second

album representing Relativity, shocking fans with a raw flow that hits the streets like Bolivian fish scale that's straight off the table. "Jealous One's Envy" is raw dope. His second single, "Envy," contains the sample from Marvin Gaye's

"Sexual Healing" mixed up by Infamous I.E.S. Featured guest Bone Thugs-N-Harmony co-stars in the video. Fat Joe is on fire.

On the left coast for Relativity is Valjejo's finest, Mac Mall, who sprinkles game amongst us all. We all need to be reminded about the real deal going down around town, and Mall brings the truth straight with-out the bull. He's real. Mac Mall is definitely gonna make noise. Check for Mall's new single, "Get Right".

Common laid the law down in Atlanta at the last Grammy seminar and put some lyrical fire under Ice Cube's A&R. Not to start the hype, but Common got something for that A&R. And not to keep the hype on the East-n-West, but come on folks we all know who gave him love when they kicked him to the curb in L.A. New York did.

This looks like a big year for Relativity, with a lot on the plate and still getting flat, stay tuned for new releases from Common, The Beatnuts, No I.D., Frankie Cutlass, Dru Down, DJ Honda, and The Dayton Family.

peace Glow Rob-n-Rich Kidd

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*Drew Snavely
Fairview, PA*

Mariah Carey hardly ever does interviews, and after reading yours, it's easy to understand why. She naively dismisses the possibility (and reality) that her marriage to Tommy Mottola has benefited her career, superficially discusses her biracial heritage, and resorts to every tired cliché in the book to articulate her thoughts. Mariah is just another vapid Barbie doll whose material lacks the muscle and originality her otherwise powerful voice demands. She may be on the top of the charts, but her time will soon pass.

*Richard Williams
Jamaica Plain, MA*

Here are Mariah's favorite top five "daydreams" that she hopes will come true "one sweet day":

1. To be like Patti Labelle.
2. To win a Grammy in '97.
3. To run down Alanis Morissette so she won't make the '97 Grammys.
4. To stop looking like she's stuck-up.

No. 1 daydream: Will do anything (even marry the fat president of her label) to be just like Whitney.

Your story should have been called "Interview With a Liar."

*David Allen
Boston, MA*

Mariah is as down-to-earth as anyone else, and the fact that people say that she is consid-

find people using these substances as a way of becoming empowered.

*Michael Davis
Woodbridge, VA*

Why did the pro-black era of rap (1988–90) become replaced by this nihilistic 40s-and-blunt nonsense? Could it be that rap during that era unexpectedly began to awaken the African consciousness, and the only way to put the giant back

No matter how you look at it, musicians are role models—whether they like it or not! Rap audiences read magazines, watch videos, and listen to records, and can be easily influenced by their messages. If these artists want to smoke weed or drink their 40s, that's their choice, but they should sell their music and not their lifestyles. Musicians should be conscious about the messages that they send to their listeners.

*John J. Capraro
Utica, NY*

Short Stuff

Todd Shaw or Too Short ["Short Stop" by Sacha Jenkins, April] or whoever the hell you are, you're deluded. How the heck can you classify yourself with a monarch like Rakim? Selling records has more to do with business than genuine lyrical skills, so while I can acknowledge you as a great entrepreneur, you're hardly an artist of Rakim's caliber. Hip hop comes from the heart and soul—not your genitalia!

*E.J. Jones
Blythe, CA*

Few Good Men

We are not in the same state of mind as those brothers and sisters of the 1960s ["Get It Started" by Charlie R. Braxton, Get Up On It, April]. The reason that era produced such vast numbers of activists was the overall attitude and the

"Mariah is just another vapid Barbie doll whose material lacks the muscle and originality her powerful voice demands."

ered white is crap! How can you say that when she's worked with Ol' Dirty Bastard, Boyz II Men, Da Brat, Xscape, and Vicious? I am black, Creole, French, and Native American (Cherokee), and I take it seriously when people disrespect us "mutts." I congratulate Mariah on her success and encourage her to keep representin' us crucial biracials.

*S. Fleming
Chicago, IL*

sleep was to inject it with mind-altering substances? What is sad is that we put up with the anti-African activities waged by record companies and multi-label companies such as (geno-) St. Ides. This foolishness has to stop, and if the Hip Hop Nation won't or can't stop it, the Conscious Black Nation will.

*Paul Scott
Operation MEDIA (Mass
Education Developing
Intelligent Africans)
Durham, NC*

How High?

If you are a hip hop artist, you have to perpetuate a lifestyle based on hustling and getting wasted on blunts or 40s ["To Be Blunt: Are Alcohol and Drugs Poisoning Hip Hop?" by Ronin Ro, April]. This is part of what has been defined as "bein' a real nigger" (an excuse for some of these brothers to be publicly ignorant, uneducated, irresponsible, apathetic, and yes, as high as a mutha). I've always been concerned about the apathy of African-Americans toward getting wasted or "blunted." Manufacturers know what they're doing when they advertise for St. Ides, Schlitz Malt Liquor, and Colt 45. You put these types of products into a community that is plagued by poverty, despair, and hopelessness, and you will eventually

political/social climate. These activists were also well informed on the social conditions, political infrastructures, and economic stratagems used to oppress the people. If we were to ask Huey P. Newton or Malcolm X in this day and time for reading material that would enlighten us, I seriously doubt that they would recommend Donald Goines or Iceberg Slim. We cannot better ourselves or become leaders for our dying communities if we allow ourselves to be ignorant and confuse this society's entertainment with the knowledge that will uplift our people.

*Robert C. King Jr.
Albion, PA*



YOUR BEST SHOT

QUINCY LENEAR, CHICAGO, IL

Revolutionary War

Ever assume that KRS-One's voice-over for a commercial insinuates that he believes the revolution will come as a result of basketball is ridiculous ["Revolutionary Suicide" by Cheo Hodari Coker, Start, April]. Here's a thought: Maybe, just maybe, the commercial was done purely for the sake of entertainment. You think? Where was all the beef when Bamba, I mean Hammer, was setting our struggle back 400 years by dancing for some damn Kentucky Fried Chicken?!

Raymond Williams
San Diego, CA

I couldn't believe it either when I witnessed KRS-One, one of hip hop's greats, sell out to the likes of commercialism and mass media. Contrary to popular belief, the revolution will *not* be televised. When it finally comes, it will not be about basketball. It's obvious that we must choose our revolutionaries carefully.

Gordon Glenn
Boston, MA

The Power of Love

The power of the mind and the ability to educate is all a black woman needs, even when our fine brothers constantly degrade us ["Real Love" by Joan Morgan, April]. I can't help being enraged when a beautiful sister in a video or movie uses her boobs or butt to gain attention. I am tired of the welfare-receiving, child-bearing, drug-and-sex-fiend ho crap! I wish those women would take responsibility for their actions and stop fueling the fire that reinforces these stereotypes. I am a strong and beautiful sister who is intelligent and gifted, and I don't need expensive clothes, jewelry, or makeup. I need UNITY and LOVE. Respect will come.

Nicole Catrina Springer
Hooksett, NH

The photo that accompanied your "Real Love" story almost brought tears to my eyes. Women should realize that rich or broke, their man will go out of his way to make them happy if he loves them. He won't try to buy his way into their beds with expensive gifts. The innocence in that photo goes to show that even the most hardcore brothers can love and respect the women they care

for publicly and still "bring the pain."

Q. *Querisma Mesquite, TX*

Ol'-School Scribe

Thanks for giving Zora Neale Hurston the recognition she so richly deserves [Props by OJ Lima, April]. I recently read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and I nearly collapsed at how well written it was. Ms. Hurston was a revolutionary ahead of her time, and she gets much respect from me.

Kessa Cockrell
Ebensville, AL

Cuba Libre

I was on the youth trip that Paige Bierma talks about ["Hip Hop Havana," March], and it was a life-changing experience for me and many others. One purpose of our trip was to get young people from Cuba and the United States to hang out and get to know each other. We spent time playing hoops, biking around Havana, and dancing along the waterfront to DJ Quik and Gang Starr. It was also an emotional trip, because the people were so friendly and generous. Despite the shortages of materials (largely due to the U.S. blockade), they still invited us into their homes and offered us whatever they had. I've met people of all ages, races, and political views who have been to Cuba, and all of them said that visiting that country is something they will never forget.

Tony Neuman
Global Exchange
San Francisco, CA

Editor's Note: For more information, call Global Exchange at 800-497-1994.

The Reason for Rhyme

HIP HOP IS NOT DEAD ["Is Hip Hop Dead?" by Greg Tate, March]. It's just transcending in form, style, and appearance. I agree that many artists of today are lacking the real rugged, down-to-earth flavor of the old school, but hip hop has fought for respect in the industry and has made it big! It is a powerful (and entertaining) force among African-Americans. Hip hop music is in its truest form: a way of life and self-expression for many urban youth of yesterday and today.

Staci Young
Slaten Island, NY

DJ Dud

Josh Tyanigali's story on DJ Theo [Look, March] from 92.3 The Beat in Los Angeles made me nervous. As an L.A. native, I love the Beat but boycott the station during the afternoon hours when Theo (the wannabe Barry White) is on the air. He has a major identity crisis: Theo is Asian and yet tries to act like some soulful-type pimp. The guy sounds like he's got a frog stuck in his throat—which is in no way sexy! In the future, please concentrate on some of L.A.'s better DJs.

Latisha Scott
Los Angeles, CA

CORRECTIONS

- The Bone Thugs-N-Harmony photograph on our May cover was shot by Reisig & Taylor for Creative Exchange Agency.
- In May Next, the photograph of Money Mark was taken by Storm Hale.
- The May review of Wessyde Goon Squad should have stated that Babyface's wife, Tracey Edmonds, is the CEO, president, and owner of Yab Yum Records.

IN MEMORIAM

James T. Jones IV, a music critic for USA Today and sometime VIBE contributor, passed away March 16 of a heart attack and kidney failure. Those wanting to send donations to the James T. Jones IV Music Scholarship fund can mail checks payable to Howard University in care of: James T. Jones IV Music Scholarship c/o Dr. M. Frances Stubbs Executive Assistant Office of the Vice President for University Advancement Howard University Room 424, Administration Building 2400 Sixth Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20059

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 205 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10016. Or send E-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

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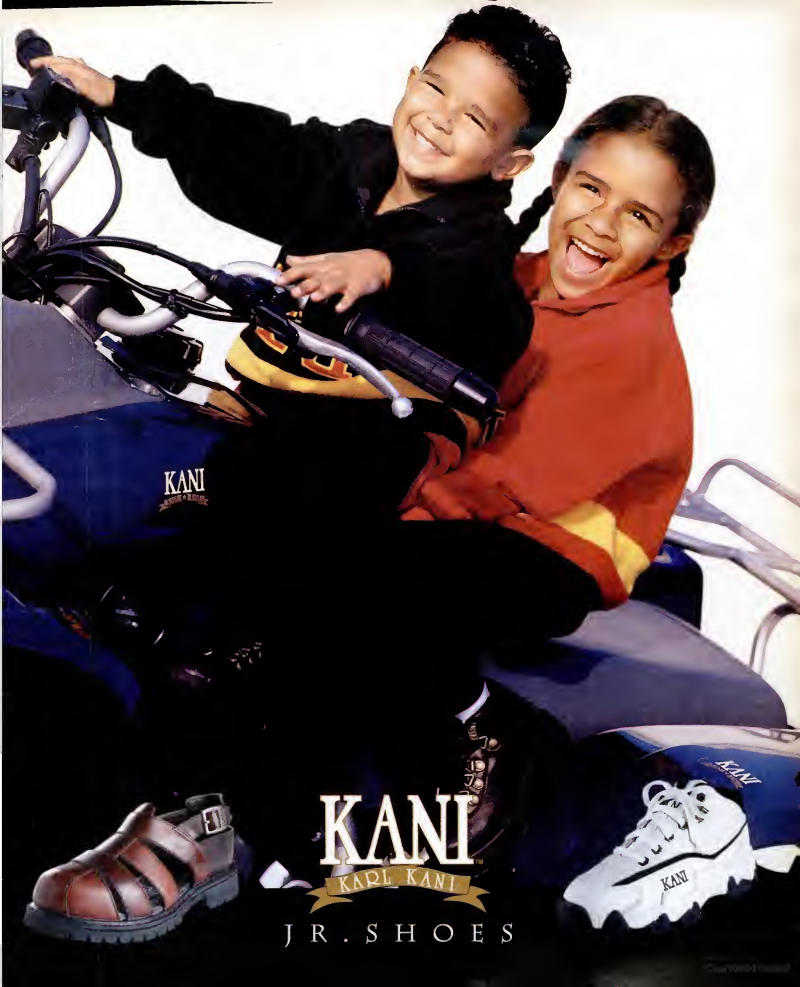
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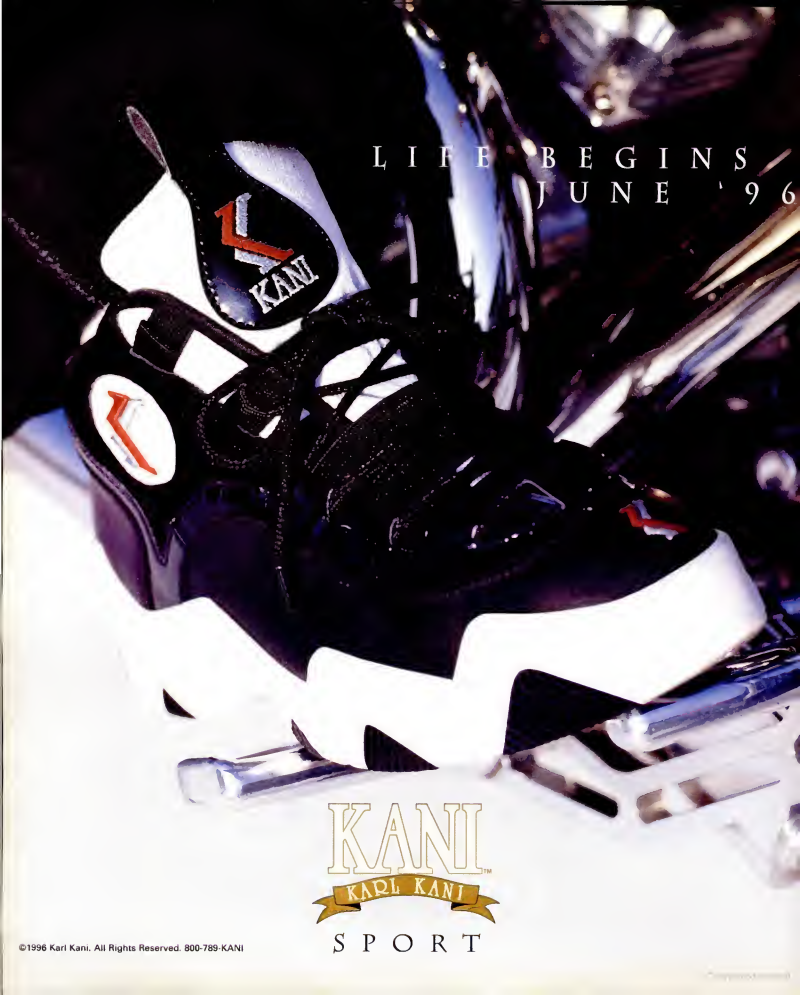
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Start

The Soul of Summertime

Just when things seem to be gettin' worse around the way—so-and-so got shot, that girl's havin' another baby, homeboy's pops got the AIDS—summer in all its multifavored blissfulness steps to us, bathes us in sunshine, and says, *Yo, kid, everything's gonna be light.*

Really, though, there is something truly therapeutic, even liberating, about the sights, sounds, and soul of summer: the boys scopin' out the girls and the girls scopin' out the boys, the colorful and all-too-revealing clothes, the mobile stereo systems better known as cars and jeeps, the all-day barbecues and spirited games of dominoes, the tiny bodies splashing through water blasting from open hydrants, and all the folks taking in the show from the safety of their rooftops and fire escapes.

Summertime is like that cool-ass cousin from down South who makes his or her way to the big city just to chill for a few months and—along the way—shows you things you never dreamed possible: walks in the park with a newfound love, house parties without beefs or turf wars, music festivals where your body moves in ways your mama said would surely lead you to the Devil, and a scorching sun that makes it okay to sweat and smell a little funky 'cause everybody is sweaty and funky.

That cool-ass cousin knows what time it is: time to lay back in the cut, reflect, regroup from a hellish winter or a hard year at school, switch jobs, plot for the rest of the year, and eat as much food as you can—especially when somebody else is cooking it. And just like that cool-ass cousin when he or she's about to peace you out and head home, as summer fades, you can't help but smile and say, *Thanks for everything. I can't wait to see you again next year.*

Kevin Powell

All Mixed Up

Have underground mix tapes turned corporate?

start

In the late '70s, when breakbeat deejaying ruled hip hop, the mix tape was rap's equivalent to rock's live concert recording. These cassettes, sold on the streets or in small record stores, documented the skills of jocks like Afrika Bambaataa and Jazzy Jay. By the end of the '80s, though, mixmasters like Bronx DJ Kid Capi were revolutionizing the art of the mix tape, backspinning, cutting, and freestyling over mixes in ways Bambaataa and Jay never did.

As hip hop progressed, so did the mix tape. Besides showcasing a DJ's skills, cassettes started to include exclusive rhymes, unreleased songs, and new remixes. These \$10, 90-minute tapes now sell anywhere from 50 to 200 units per title weekly around the country, with profits split between DJs and retailers.

But a few years ago, the stakes were raised: New songs or pieces of albums could be found for sale on the street before they made it to stores (tracks from KRS-One's 1993 *Return of the Boom Box* appeared on several mix tapes months before the

strong to create promotional tapes. And with last November's release of Loud/RCA's *Funkmaster Flex Presents the Mix Tape Volume I*—also on vinyl and CD—the mix tape was elevated above ground. By March, Flex's album had sold 170,000 copies.

Loud is considering a follow-up, though that might prove difficult: Most of the songs on *The Mix Tape* were older tracks or came from Loud's catalog because the label couldn't get the rights to new songs—something street tape makers don't worry about, since they don't pay royalties. Ironically, copyright laws might actually preserve the bootleg industry.

"My CD shouldn't affect underground tapes," says Funkmaster Flex, "because those are for the aggressive hip hop listener. My CD is for everybody, not just the underground guy." Iain from Tape Kings concurs. "Flex's CD has increased business for me—now more people are curious to know what the whole mix tape phenomenon is about." *Chairman Mao*



Everything you always wanted to know about hip hop but were afraid to ask

Q: Are Digable Planets coming out with a new project? R.S., Paris, France

A: Yeah, it's called *Rebirth of Wack*.

Q: In the song "Jussurmen" by Das EFX, Skoob says, "I watches All My Children." And in "Livin' Proof" by Group Home, Lil' Dap says, "Watch As the World Turns and I will come back." Are rappers becoming addicted to soap operas? C.H.L., Lancaster, CA

A: Yes. Now you know the real reason so many rappers blew off the Million Man March.

Q: Do you think Too Short can go back to Oakland and hold his head high after rollin' out like that? S.D., Atlanta, GA

A: Why not? It worked for Al Davis and the Raiders.

Q: Regardless of what I do to it, my hair always ends up clashing with my face. Why can't I dye my hair and get the same effect that Mary J. and Faith get? M.S., Toronto, Ont., Canada

A: Mary and Faith get their hair done by professionals. If you got the cash, you can too. If not, well, at least you get to look like Dennis Rodman.

Q: Have you noticed that the quality of rap videos has been improving lately? D.R., Philadelphia, PA

A: Yeah, in the past year alone we've seen TLC walk on water, the Pharcyde kick it backward, and Tupac and Dr. Dre patrol the sandy deserts of California as futuristic road warriors. What's next? Queen Latifah as a speed-crazy, gun-toting, herb-smoking, hell-bent rebel?

Q: Will Michael Jackson and Coolio do a song together before the turn of the century? B.C., Pittsburgh, PA

A: No, because by the year 2000, I fully expect Coolio to be known as the King of Pop and Michael Jackson to be hitting the pipe.

Got a question about hip hop? Hit me off at: The Rap Bandit, P.O. Box 48382, Philadelphia, PA 19144, or rapbandit@vibe.com.

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STREET CRED
Record companies listen to the buzz from bootlegged mixes—and now they're listening in too.

bullets point-blank news



TRY A LITTLE TENDERNES

After penning the sexy and disappointing scripts for *Showgirls* and *Jade*, Joe Eszterhas will next dock at the bay of Otis Redding's life. Universal has purchased *Blaze of Glory*, which focuses on Redding's relationship with his manager, Phil Walden. But the controversial writer—the last journalist to interview Redding before his 1967 death—hasn't overlooked the soul singer's way with women. A sample Redding pickup line from an early draft of the script: "Sugar, can I stick it in you, Mama?" Eddie Murphy, Wesley Snipes, and Prince have been mentioned for the role.



CALL GIRL

When she's not in the studio or touring with her brother, E-40, Suga T. spends her time on the phone. In January the Oakland-based rapper started her own telephone service: 900-28-SUGAT. For \$1.99 per minute, callers can select from nine different options: You can access a kiddle line, one offering spiritual advice, the lowdown on her latest sexual exploits, musical snippets, and a gossip line. "I figured it could bring some extra change in case my album doesn't sell," says Suga T.

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Dr. Dre: Stepping out

Straight Offa Death Row

Another California earthquake ripped through the hip hop nation and once again its epicenter was Death Row Records. Dr. Dre, cofounder of the four-year-old company and the creative force behind its \$125 million success, has reportedly left to form his own label. At press time, none of the parties involved would comment on Dre's departure, but sources told VIBE it's just a matter of time before he signs with Interscope and announces his new plans.

Since January, rumors of Dre leaving Death Row ricocheted through the industry like stray bullets. The alleged reasons were myriad: Death Row cofounder and CEO Suge Knight was upset that Dre didn't appear on *Saturday Night Live* with Tupac in February or show up at Snoop Doggy Dogg's murder trial; that Dre wanted to introduce rock, reggae, and jazz into Death Row's musical mix while Knight wanted to stick to hip hop and R&B; and that Dre was leaving to hook up with Def Jam's Russell Simmons. Neither Death Row nor Interscope would comment.

Simmons, however, wanted to clarify his role in the drama. "The rumors of me signing Dre are false," he says. "I'd pay any amount of money to be in business with him, but we've had no discussion."

Joseph V. Trella

Studio Time: In the lab with Little Kim and the Notorious B.I.G.

Dressed in a red jacket and Chanel sunglasses, with Tweety Bird decals on her long fingernails, Little Kim is nodding to the beats creeping from the Hit Factory's Yamaha speakers. On this warm night, the new, ultramodern studio is packed with female hangers-on, managers, and the Junior M.A.F.I.A. family. "One of the reasons we like this studio so much," says Kim, "is because there's enough room for everybody."

Not that she's just hanging around; she's busy working on a slew of songs for Biggie's next record (details of which are about as hush-hush as the Manhattan Project), a new remix for another video of Junior M.A.F.I.A.'s No. 1 rap hit "Get Money," and tracks for her first solo album, *Queen Bee*, due out in August. "Queen Bee is like Biggie's little baby, and he wants to birth it himself," Kim says, laughing. The album is being

produced by, among others, a new jack named Combread, whom the big man discovered working at Puffy Combs's New York studio, Daddy's House. "He's an unknown," says Biggie. "But we're not really into names, we're into flavor."

As Little Kim prepares to do her vocals, she makes funny faces at Biggie through the glass. "It's hard working with female artists sometimes, because they have a lot of needs," mumbles Biggie. "We try our best to keep her happy, because MC or not, if a girl ain't happy, she ain't doin' nothing."

After spitting out nasty rhymes into the Neumann mikes, Little Kim still looks perky. As the engineer prepares to play back the track, Kim smiles and says, "With my raps, I'm take it from where I've been to where I'm going—I'm just doing what I have to do." Michael A. Gonzales



Little Kim

MIKE A. GONZALES

bullets point-blank news



•READY FOR PRIME TIME PLAYA

After six movies and his cult British hit, *Baadass T*, Ice-T is moving to America's small screen. His upcoming series, *Players*, described as a cross between *Mission: Impossible* and *The A-Team*, features four imprisoned criminals—a con artist, a computer hacker, a safe cracker, and an Asian mobster—who are freed to help solve crimes. *Players* is currently in pre-production and doesn't have an air date yet, but NBC has expressed interest. "What I like about this project is that regular people get to do something, not the cops," says Ice.



•BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Negro League baseball, General Mills created a special-edition Wheaties box featuring Hall of Famers Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, and Cool Papa Bell. Originally issued for Black History Month, General Mills has continued selling the boxes because of overwhelming consumer response. Revenues from a box-top hat offer will benefit the Jackie Robinson Foundation, living ex-ballplayers, and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. "The legacy of the Negro Leagues will live on," says John O'Neil, former Negro Leaguer and museum chairman.



Bobbito Garcia plays the tracks DJ Premier states the facts

A lot of people don't know the difference between the terms *rap* and *hip hop*. For those who don't, hip hop is DJ Premier. When he and Guru perform as Gang Starr, Premier spins live, keeping the culture's original performance aesthetic alive. When he's producing Nas, KRS-One, Fat Joe, Das EFX, or Jeru, his mission is to make unique, straight-up hip hop jams—not commercially accessible rap records. And right now, there is no other DJ/producer that got it *looked* like he does.

• GANG STARR—"Jazz Music"

P: "Jazz Music." We did our first album, *No More Mr. Nice Guy*, in 10 days. Stu Fine [former president of Wild Pitch Records] asked us to do a dedication to jazz artists.

B: Stu came up with the idea?

P: Yeah, plus my grandpa was a jazz musician. He didn't like hip hop, but this record would help him understand that we appreciate his stuff too. Spike Lee asked us to take it a step further with "Jazz Thing" on the *Mo' Better Blues* soundtrack. He felt like we left out mad people [on "Jazz Music"]. Then we hooked up with Branford Marsalis, got our deal with Chrysalis...

B: A lot of people attribute jazz-influenced hip hop to Gang Starr.

P: Yeah, but that wasn't our inten-

tion. Everyone was on James Brown so I was, like, "I'm gonna show some jazz shit." Hip hop is hip hop no matter what you use. It's how you interpret the music.

• ROBERTA FLACK—"Compared to What"

P: I think... [Halfway through the song] Roberta Flack!

B: Do you know the name?

P: What's the name? *Shit*. This is the first song on side A. Goddamn, I got it, too. Stole it from my moms!

P: Primo! I stole it from my pops! P: My mom used to point to this. She's a big influence—an old B-girl, true to the game.

B: The name is "Compared to What," off of *First Take*.

P: This is dope. She's ill, like Aretha Franklin.

• PIECES OF A DREAM—"Mt. Airy Groove"

P: Aw, man, this is, uh, "Mt. Airy Groove." Pieces of a Dream.

B: Ahh! You win a trip to Hawaii! P: This is B-boy history. Lots of cats now don't know their history. Don't even know Cold Crush. I used to break and everything. I still got a little skills...

B: Yeah, you'll break all right—your legs!

P: My whole crew used to battle,

wear the white gloves...

B: Did you have a B-boy name?

P: WaxMaster C on the floor and on the wheels. My man Meatball and me started my first sound system. We put up money for the speakers. I stole my first 1200s from this cat. He'll probably read this and be, like, "Aw, you stole 'em?!"

• ELVIS COSTELLO—"Only Flame in Town"

P: I know this.... Nah, maybe I don't. Is this a Spanish record?

B: Nah.

P: Turn it up, I got bad ears. [He ponders deeply] Elvis Costello?

B: Primo!! Primo!! I'm impressed, brother. But how could you think it was Spanish?

P: It was low. I'm always blasting music.

• THELONIOUS MONK—"Bemba Swing"

P: Sounds familiar. Coltrane?

B: Nah, it's not a horn player.

P: You're getting me on this one.

B: It's a piano player.

P: It's not Basic, is it? Monk?

B: Yeah, Monk.

P: I got his documentary. He was a buggy motherfucker. Usually the buggy ones come up with the most creative music. I'm a little buggy.

(You Gotta) Fight for Human Rights

Twenty bands including the Fugees, Smash-ing Pumpkins, the Beastie Boys, De La Soul, and A Tribe Called Quest are scheduled to perform at the Tibetan Freedom Concert, June 15 and 16 in San Francisco. Tickets are roughly \$30 a day, with proceeds earmarked for various pro-Tibet charities.

The event, staged by the Milarepa Fund, a nonprofit organization founded by the Beasties, aims to raise awareness of the Dalai Lama's nonviolent effort to liberate Tibet, which has been under Chinese occupation since 1950. The Dalai Lama—believed to be the reincarnation of Buddhism's eternal Spirit of Compassion and the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989—leads Tibet's spiritual and political struggle from his exile in Dharmasala, India.

"It's gonna take everyone's involvement to change what's happening right now in Tibet,"



says Beastie Adam Yauch, who's participating in a monthlong international boycott of all Chinese products. "The principles that the struggle is based on, Buddhist or not, are just really pure."

David Bry

start

bullets point-blank news

• PUFFY ON THE RUN?

When Bad Boy Entertainment's offices shut down for two days in April, it heightened the rumors that Sean "Puffy" Combs was taking his company from Arista, where his deal had reportedly expired, to Sony. Untrue, he says: "It's unrelated. I had a financial problem with Arista, but we worked it out." While Combs is seeking a long-term contract—he's discussed one with Sony, EMI, and MCA as well—he claims the brief vacation wasn't a power move. "I would love to stay at Arista," he says.



• PAROLE MODEL

On March 19, San Francisco's Rappin' 4-Tay released his second album, titled *Off Parole*. Ironically, 4-Tay was arrested and placed back in San Quentin shortly before the release for violating parole on drug possession charges. "I can see how someone might consider it irrational that the name of my album is *Off Parole* and I'm stuck in jail," says 4-Tay. "But now I have something that will remind me every day of what I have to do." 4-Tay is scheduled to remain behind bars until June 7.



Little Shop of Horrors

start



John Howard is a Laurens, S.C. businessman. He is also the imperial emperor of fraternal rites for the Invisible Empire International Keystone Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, and the proprietor of the Redneck Shop, billed as "the world's only Klan museum."

Customers can purchase T-shirts, baseball caps, belt buckles, pins, and key chains, all festooned with the Ku Klux Klan "miaow," or logo. "There's lots of old Klan pictures—people on horseback, at rallies," says Minister Barry Black, the imperial wizard of the KKK.

One recently acquired photo is particularly prized. "A black gentleman brought us in a picture from 1913," Black recalls. "It was a black person hung for raping a white woman. That picture's worth—in a Klansman's eyes—\$1,000. We'll probably have copies made and sell them at the store for \$5 apiece. Maybe make postcards out of them."

Thankfully, his operation is not popular with some locals: 24 days after the store opened, David Pritchard Hunter—a white man—drove his van through the front window, destroying irreplaceable memorabilia. Undeterred, Howard maintains he'll keep his store open.

Harry Allen

Say What!?

"They don't drop you so easily, because [over there] they don't have that much talent."

—Tina Turner, explaining her popularity on the European concert circuit

Etc... Etc... Etc.....



Immature

Motown will be opening a new A&R division in Detroit in early 1997, marking the company's first presence in its hometown in 24 years... **The Notorious B.I.G.** was arrested March 23 for assault, criminal mischief, and possession of a weapon after he and a friend allegedly chased and beat two aggressive autograph seekers with baseball bats outside New York's Palladium... **Tupac Shakur** was sentenced in April to 120 days in jail for failing to serve 15 days on a California freeway cleanup crew as part of his probation for a 1994 assault and battery conviction. He has until June 7 to turn himself in....



Yo, Yo Yo Advice from an intelligent black woman

I think these East and West Coast punks should wake up and stop all the bullshit they're talking. Most of them niggas ain't real no ways. Tupac says he spent 11 months in a maximum-security jail, got shot five times, and was wrongly convicted. I'm doing 17 1/2 to 40 years and may never see the streets again. I've shot at people for no reason but over a color. Now everywhere I go, niggas want to kill me, and I'm only 17. Y'all rappers have a life. So free it—don't try to be something you ain't. I wish I could release a record or write something for somebody. But I'm trapped in the pen writing, because if I didn't write I would go mad. Life is real deep in the pen. Real deep.

**WARNELL BOND
HUNTINGDON, PA**

Dear Warnell:

First of all, the West and East Coasts are not feuding because rappers are bragging about crimes they've committed. So let's stay focused here. They are entertainers with something to say or a story to tell, not criminals who want to make a documentary or album about their lifestyles. And I certainly hope you don't think you're keeping it real" with your own violent activity."

I was appalled to see KRS-One in the commercials that equate revolutionary black activity to basketball. While Jason Kidd might be a badass baller, his revolutionary tendencies have escaped my attention. When are our young black people going to hold our artists accountable for the messages they send? It seems that the only revolting going on is the doors at the banks where artists are taking the money

that they pimped from the black community.

**KELLI SPARKOW
PHILADELPHIA, PA**

Dear Kelli:

Well, one thing is for sure: You are angry, tired, and need to get a grip. Back in the day, KRS was the only rapper bigging up Nike, while everyone else was running around in their Adidas. If you don't think that it's revolutionary for Nike to finally pay him back with some recognition and a commercial deal, then you need to check yourself. How many other companies are using rappers and hip hop culture to make money with no thought of reparation? And before you call somebody else out, ask yourself, "What am I doing for the revolution?"

I'm a 14-year-old white boy. I wear baggy clothes, listen to rap music, and use words like "phat" and "bype." Because of this, people call me a nigger. This is making me upset. Just because I'm white doesn't mean I have to dress like a skater and listen to rock music. Please help!

**BRAD BUEHLER
CHICAGO, IL**

Dear Brad,

In 1996 it is not uncommon for people of all colors to embrace hip hop culture. If dressing in baggy clothes and using hip hop slang feels right to you and you're not fronting, then go on with your bad self. Like Shakespeare said, "To thine own self be true." I know when you're 14 it's really important to fit in, but trust Yo Yo, in a few years you won't even remember the people who gave you a hard time.

Need some intelligent advice?

Write to YO, YO YO, c/o VIBE, 205 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.

More than 500 screaming teenage girls bum-rushed the BBC studios while **Immature** were taping a cameo for the British children's show *Blue Peter*; no one was injured or arrested... "They call me Cuomo" / I hail from **Queens** / A tough street kid / With real big dreams. "That's just a sample of the rap that former New York governor **Mario Cuomo** delivered during a speech to the Association of the Bar of New York in March... **Hootie and the Blowfish** are suing Best Buy Company for allegedly selling Hootie lunchboxes without their permission.



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In the MIX

Feels So Good

1. Many stylish celebrities came out for Arista's pre-Grammy party in Los Angeles, but nobody did it better than Miss Mary J., who reminded us why she'll always be our queen of hip hop soul. (2.) Treach, who came to the bash not only with his woman, Pepa, but also with Spinderella and Salt, had to be the flyest brother in the room. You go, Pepal (3.) Jody Watley—looking absolutely beautiful—came out to celebrate too. (4.) Ain't nobody like Chaka Kahn, who made a grand and stunning appearance, and showed all current wannabe divas exactly how it's supposed to be done. (5.) Aww...aren't they sweet? Babyface and wife Tracey Edmonds are too syrupy for words—and we love them for it! (6.) Teenage crooner Monica hung out with Faith, who looked like she'd just seen something that scared the color right out of her. Maybe Tupac was in the room. 7. Bushwick Bill of the Geto Boys—having left his Chucky doll at home—celebrates his Jamaican roots at a concert in Atlanta. 8. Delroy Lindo, star of *Clockers*, *Get Shorty*, and HBO's *Soul of the Game*, takes time out to unwind in a Manhattan nightclub. 9. Donna Summer, the classic disco queen, has reason to smile after a crowd-stomping performance at New York's Radio City Music Hall. 10. The fine brothers of Skindiepp chill with Ice-T OG style (which means you never smile) at a party in honor of N.Y.C.'s favorite VJ, Ralph McDaniels. 11. Smoothie da Hustler, Shyheim, and Trigger vie to see who can come off the hardest on the set of Shyheim's video "Shit Iz Real." 12. Shaggy, reggae man of the moment, and D'Angelo pay homage to Stevie Wonder at an L.A. tribute celebrating Stevie's life and music. 13. And at a Polygram party, guests are blessed with a performance by the man himself, who scats with a swing band. 14. Kima of *Total* shows us why it pays to be a bad girl. 15. Natalie Cole is a gifted singer, but maybe she should consult the fashion police before striking cute little poses.

Shani Saxon





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In the MIX Too

Keep on Flowin'

Just because these folks aren't around as much doesn't mean they're out of the mix.

1. Melle Mel's Morgan, joined here by Antonio "Huggy Bear" Fargas, still makes the scene every now and then at a New York hot spot.

2. Biz Markie, who's made a name for himself on the DJ circuit, not only hypes a Chicago crowd but scares the hell out of them every time he opens his mouth. 3. I'm sure we're all very impressed by Melle Mel's six-pack, but does he have to lift his shirt every time someone asks him what he's been up to? 4. When she's not singing, Lisa Lisa can do all sorts of neat tricks, like the one where she swallows a pen.

5. Kwame still appears to be high on life while relaxing at Gotham in Philly. 6. Happy couple Al B. Sure! (who's now a VP of A&R for Motown Records) and Lark Voorhies (the girl who starred in TV's *Saved by the Bell*) get their groove on at N.Y.C.'s Metronome. 7. Talk about one-hit wonders! Jeff Redd, who sang "You Called and Told Me" on the 1991 *Strictly Business* soundtrack, still gets love around the world. 8. Mr. Paul Anthony of Full Force comes to get funky one time at Manhattan's Club Mirage. Hey, does anyone remember anything that Full Force sang?

9. Johnny Kemp, here at an Alvin Alley performance in New York, probably hasn't said the words "Just Got Paid" in a long time. 10. The father of hip hop, Kool Herc, raps to VJ Ralph McDaniels at New York's Palladium. 11. Dinco D., of Leaders of the New School, ponders his future somewhere in New Jersey. 12. Thankfully, Guy are back together and working on another album. They're partying in honor of Damion's birthday. Speaking of Damion, what does he do in the group, again? 13. Sheila E. is still leading the glamorous life but hopefully isn't taking any career advice from Speech, who hung out with her at L.A.'s House of Blues. 14. Rival New York DJs Grandmaster Flash (right) of WBLS and Kiss FM's new morning man, Isaac Hayes, coolin' in Atlanta. S.S.





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World Tour: La Dolce B-zo

start

As usual, I waited till the last minute to get my passport, which greatly jeopardized my chances of departure. But I wasn't letting anything prevent me from realizing my greatest adventure as an ambassador of New York culture. I packed some of my classic jams and even played the *Hoffa* soundtrack in the cab to Rockefeller Center. It seemed appropriate; after all, I was embarking on a mission that would take me to a whole other place. And if I wasn't careful, I wouldn't ever leave that place.

Though I'd heard stories about obtaining a passport in a day, nothing was ever mentioned about the sharp pain in the butt that you leave with courtesy of the U.S. government. The long waits, lineup counts, bickering, and room changes made me feel like a codefendant in the Simpson trial. They made an already uncomfortable situation worse by adding attitude to the soup. The passport office resembled a game show with disgusted contestants. *Some will lose a turn. Others will be sent back to Go. A few may even go to Jail!* All I wanted to do was get the "##!" out of the city for a while and find some new direction in life.

After receiving my documents at approximately 6:15 p.m., I raced to the airport to grab a standby seat on the 8:00 to Rome. My Road Manager had left on the previous flight. We were to rendezvous at our switch point in Paris before continuing on to her family's home in the region of Tuscany.

The airplane service sucked! "We'll be right back with your meal, sir," they said. Bullshit! They never came back down that aisle, except to give the blind kid some milk! What am I doing here? I thought to my thoughts. Where's my supper? I said I wanted the salmon! Obviously, it's because I'm black. Why aren't I recognized as a terrific guy who just loves people?

We landed in Paris on a beautiful Friday afternoon. Clear skies, smooth navigation, the whole nine. But one thing was for sure: The peacekeepers weren't having any hijackings or bombings in this place. I waited for our connecting flight, smoking a Garcia y Vega cigar, watching the sentinels march back and forth with machine guns. One more flight and we'd be in Rome. I was so excited, I was actually scared to get on the plane. Would they see me for who I am, a terrific guy who just loves people? Or

Mafia bait? Maybe I'd made a mistake—but can you imagine trying to catch a cab to Brooklyn from here?

I stepped off the plane in my official ambassador's garb: navy blue jail outfit with burgundy Ains and a crisp straw hat. I walked the 100 yards to the gate, playing it as cool as possible, all the while

My faithful Road Manager was waiting at the gate. She'd fought the thick crowds and obtained two train tickets to our final destination. She sat reading a book while I marveled at the colorful acres of vegetation passing by the train window. Suddenly, we vanished into a tunnel for about 20 seconds.

er tunnel. Riding Italian trains ain't like surviving New York's rush hour. But you know the saying: "When in Rome..."

R.M.'s father met us at the station. He was a short, barrel-chested, middle-aged man with glasses and a great smile. After he hugged his daughter like they were auditioning for a Big Red commercial, I was introduced. "This is B-zo," she said.

"Buon giorno, B-zo!" he said. "Sup, chief?" was my reply. Although neither of us knew the other's language, we could communicate with signs and smiles. While driving to the family house in Follonica, I noticed that everyone used a scooter to get around town. Ladies over the tender age wore traditional Italian garb, something conservative but with a little color: mild blues and summer yellows. Generation X-ers stuck to the international Levi's suit, minus the baseball cap (Italians take pride in their hair).

It wasn't until we got to the casa that I realized I was really in Italy. Rarely have I seen such an emphasis on family. There's only two times a day when you can't buy a damn thing, and that's lunch and dinner. Between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 and again from 8 to 10, every shop closes and the entire family meets at the table for their daily sit-down. Grandma was there, and Mama and Sister and the Baby and Peter, the Husband, whom I affectionately called Capo. Every meal included iced tea, spring water, and a type of day-old bread that's sure to clean your teeth.

After dinner, the family adjourned to the living room for small talk and entertainment. But I took to the alcove, where



thanking God for antiperspirant. I couldn't believe I'd made it this far, but there was a bigger deal waiting at the customs desk. That's where they check your passport and decide whether you're a tourist or a terrorist.

I stepped forward and opened my books. An Italian soldier who seemed to possess the look of death glared at me with contempt. "Where are you going?" he barked. "Pisa," I said. "Why?" he barked again. "I don't know," I said with a smile. He was pissed. We sat there—and my passport—floating in limbo till he finally let me pass through the detector. Now maybe I'd find whatever it was I was looking for.

Then, *whoosh!* and the scenery was back. The train ran along a mountain-side right above the Mediterranean Sea. Directly beneath us was a beautiful white sandy beach, blanketed with miles of umbrellas.

Vroom! We entered another tunnel for another 20 seconds, and when we exited—*whoosh!*—we saw the most elegant hotel ever! His-and-hers quarters built side by side, set within a mountain with beautiful arches and your own private section of exquisite Mediterranean beach. I almost had my head severed from my shoulders because I couldn't help looking back at that breathtaking image. R.M. pulled my coat as the train entered another

Stix & Stönz

By

Bönz Malone

THE NUTTY PROFESSOR SOUNDTRACK

MONTTELL JORDAN
FEAT. SLICK RICK

CASE FEAT.
FOXXY BROWN

DOS OF SOUL

TRIGGER THA GAMBLER
FEAT.
SMOOTHE DA HUSTLER
AND D.V. ALIAS KHRIST

MONICA FEAT.
TREACH

TWELVE O'CLOCK
FEAT. RAEKWON

DEF SQUAD

RICHIE RICH

LL COOL J

THE PHATTEST SOUNDTRACK
OF THE SUMMER
IN STORES JUNE 4
ON DEF JAM RECORDS



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I wrote in my journal quietly, gazing at the starry sky. It was more than baffling to an East Coast B-boy who's never been able to see past the soot-filled clouds of New York. The stars seemed so close, it was as if you could pull one down. I thanked the Most High and his Son for providing an opportunity for me to experience this joy.

Then I felt a warm hand touch my shoulder. "B-zol 'Appy?" "Yes, Capo," I said. "Very happy." With his cigar lit and the sound of speeding scooters beneath us, we both marveled at God's gifts together and shared a moment of unmeasured bliss in unbroken silence. It felt like the more I stayed, the more I belonged.

At that moment, I stopped pondering the negative aspects of my journey's challenges—the passport office, the ugly stewardess who tried to starve me, the death-

la was located across the street from the beach, so she gathered our towels while I threw on my O'Neill swim-suit, took the Walkman, put on the Puffy shades, and hit the shore.

The beach was covered with people from all over town who came here religiously to acquire the perfect tan. Strange to see so many Italians obsessed with getting darker skin. Rows and rows of Mediterraneans drenched in oils, sucking sun on the hot sand, waiting for their biscuits to brown. I adjusted the Puffy shades to clock the natives while incognito. This ain't the Italy I see in the movies! Where were the fat old men of respect walking around with love rings—men who eat with the elite, then stroll through villages avenging the wrongs done to poor, common folk? How could a terrific guy who just loves people get down with the dons?

peace, like the minds of the Mediterraneans. Preparing meals and picking fine cigars became as easy as telling time by clocking the sun. After lunch one day, Capo took us on a drive for some sightseeing. A "nearby township" in Tuscany can be at least a 60-mile drive in the midst of extremely dry heat. But it sure beats holding down the corner of Rodeo Drive. As fancy as that place is, it's all synthetic glitz. Nothing natural grows in Hollywood except egotistical tumors in the anal passages of the filthy rich. The Tuscans enjoy a simpler lifestyle: a beautiful day, steady and rewarding work, soccer, a glass of wine, a perfectly grown tomato, an old song, and *famiglia*. To them, there is nothing more important.

On this particular day, Capo showed us the amazing city of Siena. Tourists from all over the world come

Before I left the block, I told my boys I was going

by customs official—and understood the fact that even these trials have meaning. I was now a member of a family in the most beautiful place I've ever been. I couldn't control my emotions. When Capo touched my shoulder the second time, I already had bags of water in my eyes. As he looked at them, I pointed to a star and made a fist. I hugged him like I was in the Big Red commercial this time, said good night, and fell asleep on the terrace.

The next morning, I was awakened by the intense heat. The weather was so dynamic that my Road Manager and I took our mission on the road. Our vil-

Maybe this whole trip was a waste of time.

My escort returned from the crystal waters and asked, "How are you enjoying the beach?" I bluntly told her that the fat lady to my left was staring at my trumpet. "B-zo, you have to understand. There are no black people here. To them, you are exciting." Shortly thereafter came a Senegalese salesman peddling Poncherello shades. When he got to me, he almost stopped with the same bewildered look everyone else had. I gave him a facial that explained the whole scenario. He got the point and did the sand shuffle.

With each passing day, my soul became more at

here to marvel at the famous 500-year-old clock that towers almost 300 feet high. Moreover, Siena stands atop a hill nestled between two mountains, so when sitting in one of its fly little B-stros, you can see miles of homegrown herds and spices for as long as you can stand the sun.

I was smoking a cigarette in Siena square when this sweet Lolita rolled up on me, asking in her seductive native tongue, "Would you like something from the bar?" "You talkin' tuh me, baby?" I replied. She smiled. It figures: I go for weeks back in Brooklyn lookin' for some action, then I come all the way out

EDDIE MURPHY THE NUTTY PROFESSOR

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SCREENPLAY BY DAVID SHEFFIELD & BARRY W. BLAUSTEIN

SCREENPLAY BY DAVID SHEFFIELD & BARRY W. BLAUSTEIN

JUNE

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here and get booked by some thick Italian chick.

We enjoyed a fun conversation, I think. I just know that we laughed a lot. Anyway, she was dope! The two of us sat at a private table, but close enough that others could see us together. The sun blasted through the grapevines overhead and turned our faces bright orange. We were in our own zone. Her style matched the grace of Sophia Loren; mine mirrored Cyrano. She was the self-Lolita of my international dreams, and I was the spy who loved her (even if only for a minute). Then her mom showed up and poured lime into our country-time romance.

She apologized for having to go so abruptly. I just cracked a smile and blew some smoke. Yeah, even out here, the Black Fönz gets burn on Italian carpet. That's when I heard Capo and R.M. cracking up. They'd been

to him through bulletproof glass. Yeah, that was the life I left behind.

I pressed PLAY on the Walkman, which was cued up to the perfect traveling jam (A Tribe Called Quest's "Award Tour"), and stared into the sea. I've been called a typical Aquanaut, a straight-up buggy mutha\$#@%#!. I love water, always have. I also love fish. But if you asked me if I love peace—I'm ashamed to say that I never tried it long enough to know for sure.

Earlier that morning, a gang of harmless little fish held me hostage on the jagged rocks for about an hour. I wanted to make a break for it, but they were too deep. When I moved, they moved. If I stayed still, they'd parley. Of course I wasn't threatened by them; in fact, I was impressed by these little creatures. Like an abbot of Shao Lin, I studied the style of the fish. Although a small

going is to the weed spot on Putnam and Franklin. They don't know the story of the International Nigga. He's not satisfied with a mere train ride to the Bronx. He has to see the world by invading foreign soil, not by looking at pretty pictures. Before I left the block, I told them I was going to rock the world, and that's exactly what I did.

That night it was hard for me to fall asleep. I think it was because our trip was winding down. Watching the Italian news reports about America made me want to stay in fantasy island forever. Never once have I thought of leaving New York for any long period of time, but this was too dope to go back to Hot Block. The Italians loved the concept of the International Nigga. They had as much fun buggin' out on me as I had buggin' 'out on them! Plus I was learning a lot from

to rock the world, and that's exactly what I did.

watching the whole thing, and they teased me about it nonstop the entire 60 miles back. Why can't they just understand that I'm a terrific guy who just loves people—especially women!

For a New York Nigga this was truly paradise, but for the International Nigga, it was a reevaluation of life and style. If I were in the States right now, what would I be doing? I'd be right there with the other hoods, getting high on Hot Block. In my mind, I could see cops throwing some street-corner don's face into the concrete. I could hear the kid's mother cry as they took her son away to a place where she could only talk

group, they rolled in peace and unity. If you were successful in scattering their little gang, they'd just regroup to care of business once again.

It occurred to me that if there were a shark for every friend that deserted me in times of need, I would be dinner now. But if more people adopted two things from fish—(1) get deep, and (2) never leave your brothers and sisters behind—then we'd be a nation that walks in peace and unity by the millions every day! Funny that I'd never thought of this conceit before now.

Most of my peers couldn't understand the reason for this trip. The only place they're concerned about

Capo, who treated me not like a guest, but as a son. He was a family man who knew how things should be run: firm, yet smooth. And it brought him joy to see me eating his native culture to the bone.

For the first time in years, I was at peace with who I was. I stood on the terrace, raised my hands to the sky, and with a clear, confident voice, I cried out, "I am Ambassador B-zo! The International Nigga!" I'd waited a long time to exhale, and Italy was the perfect place to do it.

To be continued...

[illegible]

28TH

Houston, We Have a Problem

start

As this month's VIBE went to press, screenwriter and director Dianne Houston had just found out she did not win an Oscar in the Best Live Action Short Film category for her first film, *Tuesday Morning Ride*. Even so, Houston will make the history books: She is the first African-American woman to ever be nominated for a directorial award, and also the only black person nominated in any category this year. The latter of these facts generated much controversy, including a *People* cover story about racism and Hollywood, and a Jesse Jackson-led boycott of the Oscar ceremonies.

Houston, a woman who radiates fire, poise, and intelligence, displays a down-for-whatever attitude as things heat up around her historic and modest nomination. "It's not like I've been slamming my head against a wall for years trying to get an Oscar, so I don't have all the usual angst about it. People in the industry who bow down to the Oscar act like it's the best thing since birth, but I'm, like, Oh, this is very pleasant." Asked how she felt about the spectre of a boycott, Houston replies: "As someone who is a realist and not an apologist for racism, I feel the best way to change things is from the inside. That's why on my film I worked with a crew that had 28 black women, for example."

Houston's short feature stars Ruby Dee and Bill Cobbs (*The Bodyguard*, *The Hindenburg Project*, and the TV show *I'll Fly Away*). Full of warmth, wit, and soul, the film portrays an elderly southern couple confronting mortality and our arrogant youth culture with love, grace, and courage. The project was sponsored by Chanticleer Films' Discovery program, which allows industry professionals the opportunity to direct. From an applicant pool of 1,000, Houston was one of four chosen in 1994.

Houston began writing professionally for television and film in 1987, and soon became executive story editor for Oprah Winfrey's "Brewster Place" series. (Winfrey also contributed emergency completion monies when Houston realized she needed a fifth day of shooting for *Tuesday Morning Ride*.) Her original script was adapted from "A Summer Tragedy," a 1933 short story by Harlem Renaissance writer Arna Bontemps. But the desire to tell a story about older people was inspired by Houston's own family history.

"My great-aunt was my best friend

until she died at about 106," Houston says. "When I look at the waste we've made of our elders, it's just devastating to me. So the motivation to this story right now was easy. It's not an indictment of our youth-oriented culture, but it is a big, stinging slap. A lot of our young people don't realize they could be offering

and scripts with stage directions that had all these terms like *upstage* and *downstage*. That's where I initially learned all that stuff. I was directing and putting on plays until I tried to make the riverboat float. The lesson I learned from that was, Don't push a good thing."

Trained as an actor, Houston left an

script for Disney based on the story of African-American choreographer Barry Martin, who was disabled in a car accident in South Africa, where paramedics took the white driver away and left him behind to die. She is also working on several projects for her company, Fifth Day Films (formed with her best friend and executive producer, Konda Mason). One is a love story about an aspiring opera singer and a young hip hop DJ. The other script, based on a true story, deals with a homeless nine-year-old kid who's adopted by a family that turns out to be America's largest black drug cartel. In return for raising him, they obligate him to become their enforcer. After the boy gets arrested for murder, the script follows two black attorneys who argue for and against his execution.

Houston happened upon that story when she wandered into a courtroom during deliberations. Besides providing a dramatic vehicle for the death penalty debate—a sort of urban *Dead Man Walking*—this story offers an opportunity to depict the war being waged for the soul of black America. "I think what's distinctive about black culture now is that it's divided against itself," she says. "We used to be unified against a common enemy, but now we've become our own enemy. I'm not saying we own the plants that make the cocaine, but we are aiding and abetting our own destruction in such a massive way that the enemy is us."

"How do we get our young people back? This guy on death row. I talk to him every week. I hope this film helps get him a stay of execution, but this kid's case does scare me, and test my compassion and understanding. At the same time I feel like if I keep an open mind with this kid, I'm going to be able to do more with my work."

Confronted with the old bugaboo about the artist's responsibility to her community, Houston cuts to the chase and keeps on stepping. "My responsibility is to keep telling the truth as I see it. My responsibility is to tell the stories that come through me as this heart and this mind perceive them. That might piss off a lot of people, and that's fine, because you've got to follow what your gut tells you to do."

Black-Owned

By
Greg Tate



Director Dianne Houston is not tripping over being this year's only black Oscar nominee.

so much more to our elders—or getting so much more."

Houston was born in Washington, D.C. in the '50s, and developed an interest in theater not long after being taught to read and write by her mom before she went to kindergarten. "I never played with dolls, because I found them pretty boring," she says, "but stuffed animals had personalities, so I started writing scripts for them. Then when I was about eight or nine, my parents bought me this toy riverboat that opened up and became a stage. It came with characters

active theater circuit in D.C. and went to New York to try her luck while still in her teens: "I wanted to be a child star and still do. I was traumatized when I learned I couldn't be a Mouseketeer. All I wanted to do was ride horses and be in the Disney movies." Turned off by the roles offered black women, Houston resumed her education at Howard and decided to become a writer/director. "Now I ride horses and write Disney movies," she says, "so I guess it all works out in the end."

Currently, Houston is developing a



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GET

♀ black plague

how to prevent AIDS from making you an endangered species
by omoronke idowu

You know the story, because the beginning sounds like your typical romance. Girl meets boy. Boy is a dream in many ways. Girl falls in love with boy. Girl has sex with boy, and trusts boy so much that she doesn't make him use a condom. Girl starts to get a cold she can't shake. Girl is fatigued. Girl goes to the doctor. Girl is HIV-positive. Girl tells boy, who admits he has been living with AIDS and couldn't tell her. And they live very differently ever after, until both their diseases become full-blown. The end.

While that's not my personal tale, the fact that so many black women are dying from this epidemic (at a rate nine times higher than white women) is my problem. AIDS is now the leading cause of death for women of my race, ages 15 to 44, in the United States. And we account for over half (55 percent) of the female AIDS deaths in this country, even though we comprise only 12 percent of the female population. Scared? What's really scary is who's giving it to us—and I don't mean that tired genocide conspiracy theory.

"When a man loves a woman," sang Jody Watley in her 1993 update of the Percy Sledge classic, "he knows the reality of AIDS / He won't bring it home to you by some other love he's made." You may think your man would never hurt you, but the fact is that many of our husbands and lovers are bringing this deadly disease home to us on the regular. Only 11 percent of blacks with HIV were infected through heterosexual contact. But the risk is greater for women; it's 17 times easier for a man to give it to a woman than the other way around. So, sisters, keep yourselves safe.

And part of being safe is being absolutely sure the person sharing your bed isn't knowingly or unknowingly—risking your life.

Who knew it would come to this? Nearly a decade ago, New York made AIDS education mandatory. I was a high school student wondering how this big disease with a little name would affect my life. The case studies we learned about involved older men and women. I thought it had nothing to do with me: I wasn't a gay man, didn't shoot drugs, and had only just become sexually

active with boys my age. No problem, I thought.

But what I didn't know was that some of my peers were already getting infected. Because HIV can incubate for as long as eight to 15 years, women with full-blown AIDS in their twenties could have become infected while in their teens. Saddest of all, some 15 years into the epidemic, young people are still making the same stupid mistakes.

What is the problem? Is it denial? Paranoia about doctors? Is anyone paying attention to all the warnings—PSAs, red ribbons, dead friends? It seems so simple:

1. Practice safe sex or abstinence. If you're not using latex condoms by now, you are playing Russian roulette.

2. Pay close attention to gynecological problems. While recurring yeast infections, abnormal Pap smears, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) do not mean you have HIV, they sometimes serve as warning signs.

3. If there's even a chance that you've been exposed to the virus, get tested immediately. Because health-insurance companies may discriminate against people with HIV, it's a good idea to be tested anonymously. Go to a free care clinic, or if you go to a private doctor, you can use a fake name.

4. Vote. Pay close attention to what all the candidates are saying—or not saying—about AIDS. Your vote can aid the development of vaccines for HIV treatment, your access to clinics, and education for future generations. While in office, President Clinton increased funding for AIDS care and research by 40 percent, hastening the FDA's approval of six new HIV treatments. (Candi-

date Dole's "position paper" on AIDS is just five sentences long: He's against it.)

Clinton appointee Debra Fraser-Howze, president of the Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, blames this epidemic partially on the black community's "Third World health conditions." Despite President Clinton's 1992 campaign promise of universal healthcare (which was derailed by Congress), today there are still some who have it, some who don't. Most black women beset by poverty and underemployment don't. "It is the responsibility of this healthcare system to ensure that there is health promotion and disease prevention in the black community," says Fraser-Howze, "and that we are educated enough to ensure our protection." But reforms take time. In the meantime, you're responsible for your own life.



CLINTON'S POSITION PAPER
Sisters beware: What's love is blind, love can kill.

PHOTO BY PHILIP HARRIS

The AIDS virus has been around at least since 1981. But some people are just more susceptible to the disease than others. Here's what some victimizing virus had to say:

I am furious that Republican, conservative, right-wing, Christian groups are using political pressure to conduct a so-called holy war against people who suffer from AIDS. They think all AIDS patients are promiscuous, gay, or drug users, and they would deny funds for research, equal opportunity in the military, healthcare benefits, and compassion based on their erroneous views.

I know that AIDS is operating on a spiritual level. Man has sinned till he can't sin no more. Thus we have borne this demon to control our sinful sexual appetites.

I have had three uncles die of AIDS, all exposed by way of heavy drug use. I now have two little cousins who were born with it. I think there need to be more advertisements highlighting the way AIDS can be passed on and how not to ostracize those who do become infected.

Please show the public more people who have lived a long life even though they are HIV-positive. I think if one maintains a healthier lifestyle and a positive mental attitude, along with stable medical care, one can probably prolong one's life.

Funding for educational programs and treatments are directly related to politics, as are the laws to help those who suffer with the disease. AIDS is not just a medical problem, it's a political one.

GET
UP
ON IT

GET TESTED: National AIDS Clearinghouse of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 800-458-5231. National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, 212-614-0023. National Minority AIDS Council, 202-463-8622. Office of Minority Health Resource Center/Public Health Services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), 800-441-AHHC. Southern California Toll Free AIDS Hotline, 800-922-AIDS (English) and 800-400-SIDA (Spanish). Northern California Toll Free AIDS Hotline, 800-367-AIDS (English and Spanish). **AND GET UP ON IT!**

ON
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BOB BEAMON

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 S W I S S M A D E

MACY'S • FOLEY'S • HECHT'S • BACONS

children's story

marian wright edelman stands for the youth

by pearl cleage

Her role in history assured by the mid-'60s when she became the first black female lawyer admitted to the Mississippi bar, Marian Wright Edelman went on to devote her professional life to activism. She first organized on behalf of African-Americans, then the underprivileged, and since 1973, young people as founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. CDF's mission is to educate the nation about the needs of our children and to encourage the investment of time, money, and resources in programs aimed at helping children before they fall victim to the problems of head, heart, and health that define what it means to be poor in America.

Your organization is called the Children's Defense Fund. From whom or what do they need defending?

They need defending from adults who talk about kids but don't really protect kids. They need protection from people who neglect or abuse them. They need protection from politicians who kiss them during campaigns and then cut them first when budget time comes around. Children need protection from violence. It's unbelievable to me that we let a child be killed by guns every two hours. That's a classroomful every two days!

CDF has called for a massive gathering. Stand for Children, at the Lincoln Memorial on June 1. What do you hope to accomplish on that day?

We have issued a call for mothers and fathers and grandparents and neighbors and community leaders of all races, classes, regions, and faiths to come and stand together in a national day of commitment to children. We want to affirm our responsibility as a national community for improving children's quality of life. We want to send a message to every officeholder in this last national election of the 20th century that a huge new coalition of over 900 organizations and thousands of individuals and families is standing for children. We may not be able to agree on a lot of things as Americans, but the one thing we must come together about is that we will do no harm—nor let any political or cultural or corporate leader do harm—to children. Our children may not vote, but we do.

How do you respond to critics who call into question the effectiveness of one more march on Washington?

We are doing this as a last resort. We have got to force the country to face the moral obscenity

of letting our children die from abuse and neglect—letting our children, in the richest nation on earth, die from preventable diseases because 10 million of them don't have health insurance. There's something wrong with the moral values of a nation that

prefers to pay \$20,000 a year to keep kids in detention than to give them \$1,000 to be born healthy or \$3,500 to have Head Start.

Do you think that kind of moral appeal can still motivate people to action?

No great movements or major social change can occur without some moral context. That was true in the civil rights movement, and it's true today. This is a moral question, but it is also a practical question. There are only so many prisons you can build.

What are the long-term effects of "welfare reform"?

I think it's going to be disastrous. You're going to have more homelessness and hunger and poverty. More hopelessness. More people resorting to



"We're going to fight for you," says the founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

drugs to find some escape. You're going to find more crime and you're going to find more family breakdown, because when people don't have any hope and don't have any way of escaping and finding that there's a better life out there, they lash out. We are already seeing more cases of abuse and neglect, and much of the abuse is more severe. A child dies from neglect or abuse every seven hours.

How big a problem is AIDS among children?

It's an enormous problem, and a disproportionately critical problem in the black community. We're having an awful lot of AIDS orphans. Without adequate planning, what is going to happen to those children? We have an extraordinary incidence of AIDS occurring now among young black people, especially young women of color. We have to get

our heads out of the sand and talk to our children and tell them about the dangers and consequences of unprotected or early sex and help them through communication, not judgment and not preaching.

As an activist and a mother, what advice would you give young single parents?

That you are the most important person in your child's life, and don't you ever forget that. Single parents have raised children very well for a long time. Black folk have raised healthy, moral, terrifically achieving children even when government was not only unsupportive but was the enemy. Those folk didn't tell their kids they were going to win, but they always said, "We're going to fight for you and we're going to teach you how to fight for yourself."

How effective are young people as advocates for themselves?

I think very effective, and we've got to make them more effective by getting them more involved and by getting those who are old enough registered to vote. You know, it was young children in the civil rights movement who stood up to the dogs in Birmingham. It was young people who sat in at lunch counters and changed this country—not with guns but with moral courage. Young people have always been on the creative edge of change.

Speaking of creative change, how do you feel about the censorship of rap music?

We are a society that values the First Amendment, so I'm not for censorship, but I sure am for debate, and for parental involvement and discussion. People have a right to play what they want, and I have a right to say how much I dis- respect and dislike misogynistic lyrics that de- base our mothers and foremothers and grand- mothers. I don't want anybody calling daughters out of their name and I don't want any daughters answering out of their name.

If the African proverb is right and it does take a whole village to raise a child, what's the condition of our village?

Our village has fallen apart, and that is our central problem. We have got to reweave that web of support between family and religious congregations and school. It's harder today because we've got this thing called television. We've got this excessive materialism in our culture. We've got guns and drugs, which were not present in our childhood. But I think the way to overcome these problems is to have positive alternatives. I don't think our young people really are looking forward to dying from AIDS or guns by age 21.

They'll take better alternatives if we make them available.

For more information on Stand for Children, call 800-233-1200, or E-mail standinfo@mailbnack.com.

Research assistance by Catherine Kelly

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passion

I signed my first contract
when I was 19 years old.
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But it took me every second of
every minute before that
to make me a player.

Shawn Kemp. This is my planet.



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BOUNTY KILLER

Don't test

PICTURE 23-YEAR-OLD Rodney Price, a.k.a. Bounty Killer, lounging in his yard in Kingston's Seaview Garden section. Celebrated cellular phone in hand, he's parleying with his Manhattan-based partner in crime, Johnny Wonder, kicking contractual terms off the dome while his goats stroll around, munching grass. "I'm looking for mechanical rights, publishing," he says. "I'm not looking no up-front royalty. They can put out the album and don't give me a dollar. Let it sell gold and platinum—I'm okay."

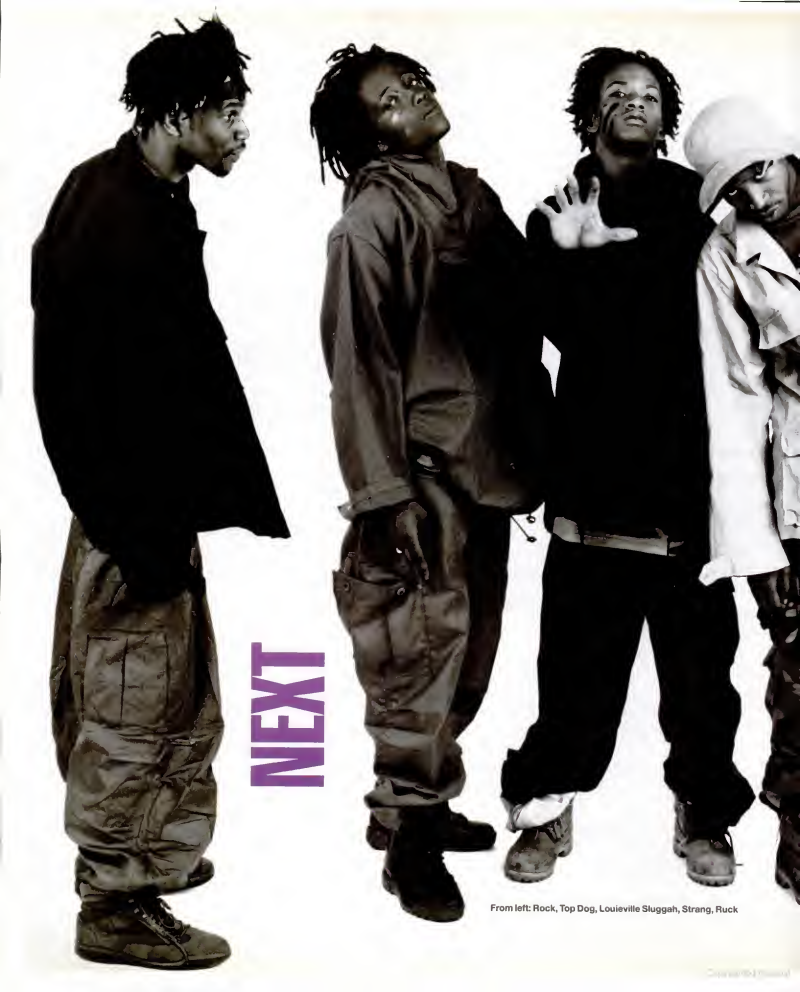
True, dat. Long before the Fugees featured him on their "Killing Me Softly" remix, Bounty's blood-chilling catchphrases like "Peepeople dead" and "Nah no mercy" made his turbocharged baritone the lethalest sound in reggae. His words are memorized by legions of ghetto youth, chanted like mantras in the valley of the shadow of death. (And they're not the only ones listening: Bounty's 1996 single "Fed Up" has been all but banned in Jamaica by the government-run JBC radio; perhaps Prime Minister P.J. Patterson was upset by the line in which Killer appointed himself "poor people governor.")

Bounty is also one of the few top DJs not signed to a major label. ("I don't want to sign with nobody, nobody, nobody," he says.) And with *My Experience*—his first truly international album—Bounty and his Scare Dem crew aim to make themselves stars without the help of Babylon. He reworks the dubplate classic "Ask fi War" with Raekwon and the RZA. There's an off-the-hook "Ghetto Hip Hopera" featuring the Fugees. And the history-making "Revolution III" combines roots reggae's crown prince, Dennis Brown, and Bounty's longtime nemesis, Beenie Man. "The rivalry is finish," Bounty swears (though *Experience* contains at least five wicked tracks aimed straight at Beenie's head). "We're musicians, not soldiers going to war."

Nope. Instead, Bounty's going global without switchin' his style. "What made you is what keep you. I ain't gonna let go my culture and my roots." As he speaks, his mama goat bleats, and you know he's telling the truth.

Rob Kenner

NEXT
PEOPLE ON THE VERGE



NEXT

From left: Rock, Top Dog, Louisville Sluggah, Strang, Ruck

THE FAB 5: HELTAH SKELTAH AND O.G.C.
Straight outta Brooklyn

BROOKLYN'S BOOT CAMP CLIK ARE IN THE DOGHILLIE: A FRONT bedroom in East New York that doubles as a makeshift studio. On this prespring night, the Fab 5—Heltah Skeltah's Rock and Ruck, and O.G.C.'s Strang, Louisville Sluggah, and Top Dog—are preparing to file into their black Duck Down Travel Mobile, en route to yet another outta-state gig. When Eddie, the van's driver, walks in to notify the crew that Duck Down needs gas, he steps on the rug with his Tims. Without hesitation, Steele of the Coco Brovas (formerly Smif-N-Wessun) instructs him to do 50 push-ups. And—without hesitation—he does.

Seems Boot Camp is more than just a name for a crew. "For every minute we're late for a business appointment—that's one push-up," explains the mellow, quick-witted Ruck. The squad believe that the music industry is a war zone; accordingly, one needs troops. Soldiers may get discharged or go AWOL, but the progression toward excellence must never cease.

So far, it hasn't. Since Black Moon's exceptional 1993 debut, *Enta da Stage*, and last year's slept-on opus *Dah Shinin* (Smif-N-Wessun/Coco Brovas), the Boot Camp Clik have created some of the most electrifying music on the East Coast.

Tradition continues via the Fab 5, who released the slug-spittin', Baby Paul-produced single "Leflaur Leflah Eshkoshka"—Eshkoshkan-ese (their self-made language) for "victory."

As with other collectives, the Fab 5 are together not only as a financial strategy but also to promote unity (most of the Boot Camp are childhood friends). But Heltah Skeltah and O.G.C. (Originoo Gunn Clappaz) want folks to understand this: "[The Fab 5] is two different groups," O.G.C.'s Strang says. "We're each coming out with our own albums."

O.G.C.'s summer-scheduled debut, *The Storm*, takes Strang and his partners on an apocalyptic adventure wherein the three pose as elements (thunder, lightning, and rain). Like the Wonder Twins, together they form one tumultuous, powerful hurricane. Heltah Skeltah's *Knockturnal* is equally confrontational. Rock and Ruck are terrorizing nighthawks, and spend the majority of their album attacking the competition with maniacal metaphors. "We don't play," Rock grows with his trademark voice of doom. "Ruck's hurting feelings, I'm ripping heads—the whole world is in trouble!"

Elliott Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHI MODU/C2

NEXT

DANA BRYANT

Wish she may, wish she might

THE SIX-FOOT-FIERCE DANA BRYANT HAS BEEN ALL HIT ON THE hit-or-miss performance poetry circuit for four years. She's published a collection of poems, *Song of the Siren: Tales of Rhythm and Revolution* (Boulevard Books, 1995). Plus, she's over 30 and grown. Yet Bryant can't seem to escape the "black mother pragmatism" she endures during every visit to her old Brooklyn neighborhood.

"The matriarch of my family always says, 'Girl, what are you doing with your life?' " she says, mimicking her 85-year-old, Cheraw, S.C.-bred Aunt Georgia.

"When are you gonna get a real job?"

But Bryant is working, this night at Biblio's Bookstore Cafe in New York. Bejeweled hands caressing air and microphone, she's performing poems from her sexy debut album, *Wishing From the Top*. First up is "Dominican Girdies," a hilarious flashback to a teenage Bryant lamentably desirous of a brick-house figure: "I wanted to know / What it meant to be / Trussed up like a turkey / To hear heated sighs from my balcony window / To be taken / Eager / Wet / Like Zeke sometimes got / OH YES!"

Bryant echoes the oral tradition of Ntozake Shange, whom she discovered at age 11 when attending a Broadway performance of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. Gil Scott-Heron is also a muse—Bryant's remake of "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" helped seal the deal for *Wishing*.

The album, which features guest spots from Carleen Anderson, P.M. Dawn, and Zap Mama, lazes Bryant's honest poems with vitality and humor. Performed against rich percussion, sinuous bass lines, and snatches of keyboard and flute, "It's an eclectic blend," she explains. "And it's very personal. I don't expect it to be an easy listen."

Next on Dana Bryant's mission is singing—in her self-described "heavy-mellow" voice. "I needed to conquer this [spoken-word] territory first," she says. "But I'll be doing both on my next album—God willing!" Aunt Georgia would be proud.

Deborah Gregory





*"I brought you in this world...
and I just took you out!"*



SUNDAY MORNINGS ARE TYPICALLY RESERVED FOR THE FAITHFUL. AND IN A huge, fluorescent-lit basement near Manhattan's Union Square Park, a congregation of some of hip hop's finest producers—Diamond D, Da Beatminerz, Buckwild—spend this particular March Sabbath worshipping at the shrine of the beat gods: the New York City Record Convention.

In the midst of all the vinyl, a slim, decidedly anonymous newcomer decked in army fatigues scours the bins. In fact, the lone tip-off to 22-year-old Jay Dee's status as hip hop's most provocative new music maker is his shopping companion—and partner in beats—Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest.

"I met Tip backstage at Lollapalooza in '94," says the humble Detroit native. "I had a group that [former Detroit Piston] John Salley was managing—so I gave Tip a tape, and the same day he called back. He was, like, 'Yo, who did these beats?' After that, shit just took off."

Q-Tip hooked Jay Dee up with the Pharcyde, and Jay ended up producing the hit singles "Runnin'" and "Drop" for *Labcabin California*. Then he created some of the best moments on Busta Rhymes's recent *The Coming*. With a strong ear for vibrant jazz melodies (check the Luiz Bonfá samba-guitar sample on "Runnin'"), Jay

Dee's work slips snugly into the low-end-y creative slot vacated in the wake of Tribe's 1993 *Midnight Marauders*.

Fittingly, Jay Dee, Q-Tip, and Ali-Shaheed Muhammad recently formed a production alliance called the Ummah (Arabic for "brotherhood"), and they share track duties on Tribe's forthcoming *Beats, Rhymes and Life*. "We had a brotherhood from when we picked up," Jay Dee explains in an easy midwestern drawl. He has reached quite an esteemed place—especially for a self-described nerd who once aspired to be an Air Force pilot.

Today, Jay Dee is charting the trajectory of his rising career. Plans include securing a deal for his Motor City crew, Slum Village (for which he produces and rhymes), as well as imminent collaborations with De La Soul, Junior M.A.F.I.A.'s Little Kim, Common, and Pete Rock. But while getting such props can make

living up to your rep difficult, Jay Dee doesn't think so.

"I'm steppin' back and lookin' at everything," he says evenly. "I'm tryin' to stay on some new shit. 'Cause people fall off every day."

He pauses. "And I ain't the one."

Chairman Mao

JAY DEE
Electric relaxation

NEXT

N.O., THAT'S NOT PHIFE

Ummah: Q-Tip, Jay Dee, Ali-Shaheed Muhammad

Your Afro
is back
in style.



Life
is
good.





Lauryn and Wyclef ram
the Park West, Chicago

READY OR NOT

Onstage at Saint
Andrews Hall, Detroit

**On tour with
the Fugees,
Sacha Jenkins
sees one too
many great
shows, sleeps
in a coffin,
and witnesses
the crew chang-
ing the face of
hip hop. Here
they come.**

**Photographs by
Mpozi Tolbert**

Brooklyn's in the motherfuckin' house! Jersey's in the motherfuckin' house!" Wydefshrieks as he stomps onstage. Then he blasts, "HAIT'S IN THE MOTHERFUCKIN' HOUSE!" and the mostly Haitian crowd inside Montreal's Club Metropolis goes bananas, yelling loud enough for the folks in Port-au-Prince to hear.

It's the second Tuesday in March, stop two of a North American tour the Fugees are headlining. Philadelphia's Roots are representing too, and when the tour gets back on American soil, so will Atlanta's Goodie MoB and Illa-delph's Bahamadia. In hip hop, where there are few smiles, flowers, or (intentional) clowns, the Fugees' show is on par with Ringling Bros.—the greatest variety show on earth. They don't rhyme to a DAT, they don't pace the stage gripping their crotches, and they aren't cursing 30 seconds into the first song about how fucked-up the sound is.

This show really begins earlier in the day, when 23-year-old Prkazrel "Pras" Michel—born in



Wydef and Lauryn
backstage in Detroit

That's what this tour is about: rejuvenating

Ecstatic Chicagoans
at the Park West

Brooklyn to Haitian parents—climbs onto the wooden stage and checks the shadows for the group's DJ, Leon, who's readying his turntables. The club reeks of stale ciggies, blunt ash, and drying beer that made its way to the floor the previous night. Clef's cousin Jerry Duplessis, the bassist and coproducer of the Fugees' platinum LP *The Score*, races through scales on his five-string.

Pras's cousin, the six-instrument-playing, Haitian-born Wyclef "Clef" Jean, 26, materializes as if from nowhere and places on the stage a glistening new black-and-gray acoustic guitar. Instead of devirginizing his new ax, though, Wyclef straps on his musical equivalent of a faithful baby-muvva—a gold-trimmed, electric Gibson machine gun. "A lot of groups have bands that back the MC," he says, with his usual crazed genius look. "But the Fugees—we do it all."

Or so it seems when Clef, Jerry, and drummer/fellow Haitian Donald Guillaume burst into a Van Halen-esque version of Run-D.M.C.'s 1984 "Rock Box" while DJ Leon spins the actual 12-inch. At the apex of this jam, the four brothers mutate into a living sound system, blending, at the behest of Leon's insistent needle, from Black Sheep's 1991 "The Choice Is Yours" to Smoothie Da Hustler's "Broken Language" to Mobb Deep's "Shook Ones Pt. II."

As "Shook Ones" expires, 21-year-old Lauryl Hill emerges, sporting a dark blue peacoat and faded Mecca overalls. Lauryl's skin is that M&M's dark brown, her petite chassis like one of Alvin Ailey's healthiest dancers. Later, when she hits the stage, her long, thin braids will flail like helicopter rotors. This moment, though, she gamely toils through the album's second single, "Killing Me Softly," her vocal cords being tested for the first time today. Clef is tucked behind a Rhodes keyboard, tickling the ivories silly, crafting melodies that melt perfectly into L's angelic singing. Pras naps, head on lap, on the drum riser. It's almost show time.

Not two hours later, Metropolis's early birds are treated to some Canadian rapper's music video on an immense hanging screen. Junior B-boys, clad in ass-dripping dungarees, patrol the area hunting for dime shorties—girls that score 10 on the ancient 0-to-10 flyness scale. "All the way from the 2-1-5," raps Roots front man Black Thought, traipsing onstage. But while the Roots' real

DJ Leon spinnin'
and winnin'

live performance, the backbone of hip hop

rhythm seems to have been locked away in a basement somewhere in Philly for the night, an animated galumph of fans at stage left demonstrates undying support.

The Roots sloppily swim from Schoolly D's 1986 "PSK...What Does It Mean?" to Blahzay Blahzay's recent "Danger," but while the covers, this night, don't seem as effortless as the Fugees', neither group does other folks' songs just to fill space—they do them to educate a new generation of hip-hop parishioners. All the same, the Fugees are downstain bugging because they've heard the Roots' cover tunes during sound check and realized that the Roots even play a couple of the same songs from the Fugees' own puttin'-on-the-hits repertoire. "It's the battle of the bands," declares Wyclef. "[Competition] is what hip hop is all about! What?! It's war, son."

Then Wyclef, the son of a Haitian preacher man, says it's time to pray. We're in a dingy basement room, cold cuts getting warm, potato chips going soft. Every hand clamps together, every eye shuts in meditation. The Fugees pray for their spirits, for positive vibes, and for the salvation of hip hop.

In 1994 the Fugees' first album, *Blunted on Reality*, breezed into the world like a lamb on NyQuil. While it sold a respectable 130,000 copies, the Fugees' goodness was buried beneath lusterless, dated production. If not for a couple of obese remixes ("Nappy Heads" and "Vocab") orchestrated by underground New York producer Salaam Remi, Lord knows where the Fugees would be today.

"The production on our last album was wack," I remember Wyclef

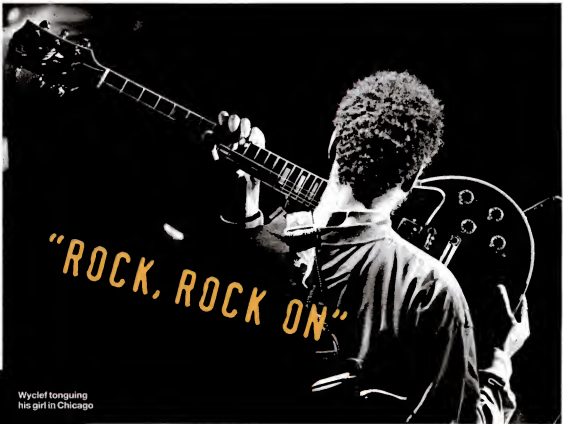
saying prophetically last summer at some stuffy music industry event. "But for the next album, we're not working with the same people. Our next album is gonna be the bomb."

So it scares me when I hear his voice bellow on "Fu-Gee-La," *The Score*'s first single, "We used to be No. 10/ But now we a permanent one." At the time of this writing, "Fu-Gee-La" was gold, and *The Score* was ranked No. 3 on *Billboard*'s pop chart and all the way at the top of the R&B charts.

Despite the Fugees' sales stats, though, recent hip

and straight-up hip hop."

While many chart-bumping groups blow up and out with their first effort, then fizzle away like Alka-Seltzer in a Dixie cup, the Fugees came back stronger in the second round, revamped and more mature. They transcend the trends because they embody everything hip hop is: While diggity raps are the rage one year and a dancehall guest on your album may be the shit the next, the Fugees have all that and more going on 24-7-365, forever. They even wrote a song that speaks to a world teeming with Fugee doubters. "Ready or not," they pro-



Wyclef tonguing his girl in Chicago

hop history says the success that currently rules everything around them is not promised—or even likely—to last very long. The demise of so-called "alternative" rap ensembles like Arrested Development and Digable Planets supports this blunted reality. Like Digable and Arrested, the mixed-gender Fugees create hardcore pop that appeals to thug niggas, grandmothers, and surfer dudes alike.

But the Fu-Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with. Their family dynamic is real. And while Digable search for a new recording contract and Arrested's happy rural posturing (and Speech's solo album) rot next to the gum under a seat at the *Soul Train* Awards, the Fugees have rewritten the decade-old laws that direct hip hop's commercial pulse. They even disobey their thirst. "They want us to do this Sprite commercial with Penny Hardaway," says Clef. "We're No. 1 on the charts, and black people haven't had anything like us in a while. But we feel like we stand for something more. This group's saying something about police brutality, the government, social issues,

claim, 'here I come.'"

"'Ready or Not' is my favorite song on the album," says Pras days later in Detroit. "The day we did that song, the three of us was each going through some pain. I was crying when she did her vocals. It was unbelievable. To see her singing with tears coming out of her eyes, it made me want to cry too."

But the band refuse to cry over the idea that, from their perspective, the media was trying to pull them apart. "The whole industry was saying that," Pras says of the talk that Lauryn's star appeal would split up the trio. "The critics, the people who write the magazines." But there will be no breaking up. The Fugees without Pras are like Bernhard Goetz without a pistol, and Lauryn won't chow down unless Clef's being served too. Blood runs thicker than loot in the Fugee clique: Jerry, Pras, and Clef can't stop being cousins.

"People didn't sleep on the *Fugees*," says Pras, whose cornrows are etched around his head like a treacherous mountain road. "They slept on the two brothers. They said she should go solo. There are always those who will



The Roots' Tariq (a.k.a. Black Thought) in Chicago

Goodie Mob, the Park West, Chicago



Lauryn

try and divide a situation, but this isn't a group that was put together. We've known each other a long time." He pauses for a long second. "I've known Lauryn since she was in the eighth grade."

New Jersey's prestigious Columbia High School is where Lauryn and Pras, both from suburban South Orange, first met in 1988. "I had this brilliant idea," says Pras, "that two girls and one nigga would be the bomb shit. Initially, it was me and this girl Marcy. We were supposed to get this girl named Tara, but I didn't like her attitude. So Marcy was, like, 'I know this other girl, but she's real young.'" Lauryn, he came to find out, was all of 12 years old.

"I was, like, *What?!*" says Pras. But good old Marcy was persistent. "This girl can sing," urged the ex-Fugees/fifth Beatle. "She's baaaaad."

Needless to say, Hill fit the part. Now it was a matter of Wyclef stepping into the frame. "I always used to meet up with Clef at church in Jersey," says Pras in a Toronto hotel room. "He would say, 'Yo, man, when I get a record deal, I'm gonna put you on board.' Then one day, he came to the studio and dropped his vocals on one of our tracks." Sparks flew. "The producer we were working with at the time was, like, 'Y'all need to be a group.' We said, Fuck it—I'd rather deal with my own family anyway."

It was Hill, though—the only non-Haitian of the crew—who became the refugee with the highest profile. Not only does she emcee and sing, she's a junior at Columbia University and also has a burgeoning acting career (having appeared in *As the World Turns* as well as Whoopi Goldberg's 1993 *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit*). But Hill is not there to be the Fugees—Hill is a Fugee, a fellow worker ant who helps to build and protect the planned Refugee Camp empire.

But in Montreal, at the Metropolis, it's Lauryn who's mobbed by a mass of probing hands equipped with pens or cameras. Pras bursts through the small mob and heads for the rear door of the venue, which is lined with tuff-guy security. One of the guards fails to realize Pras's celebrity—after all, he isn't being mobbed—and denies him access.

"I'll fuck your shit up," yells Pras to the rent-a-cop. Before he can deliver a knuckle sandwich, Pras is restrained. But another windup officer recognizes him, and Pras

is allowed to squeeze through. The words "I'm sorry, man" fall off the first guard's lips as the disgruntled artist bitterly skulls toward the stage.

It's 3:00 in the morning. Montreal is scarcely a memory, and we're on our way to Toronto. "It makes me sick," says Pras of the bus's tiny beds, referred to as coffins. "It's mad hot 'cause the engine is right underneath me. I can't sleep straight either; the coffin is too short. My body *hurts*, man." Sleeping on a bus is like riding a lame roller coaster, blind, while laying on your back. And it smells like toes and corn chips.

Lauryn is the first to retire, checking out in red pajamas with gray horses and jockeys on them. "Don't book any shows on these days," Pras orders the band's road manager, Brother Hassan Sharif. "We've got mad important shit to do." Usually sour-faced and quiet, Pras always speaks up during times that require a businessperson's touch. He tells me later that the crew are in the process of getting a label and production deal with Columbia. "Right now," he says, "I'm business-slash-artist. I'm always gonna do my thing [in terms of rapping], but when this business thing happens, it's gonna be a real responsibility."

We wake up in front of our hotel in Toronto. Down the street, trolley tracks mesh with the asphalt. Pras is wearing a T-shirt that reads GET THE FORTUNE—FUCK THE FAME. It's mid-morning, and we're on our way to what turns out to be an insane in-store performance, which they rip.

"They were calling us this 'alternative' group," says Lauryn, sitting on a stool beside Clef in the billiard area of the Phoenix Concert Theatre, besieged by college radio jocks. "And alternative, from where we come from, means no skills—or some other shit you don't really want to fuck with." Rethinking her profanity, L-Boogie asks to be pardoned for it.

But Clef has already spoken up, saying what they are: "The Wu-Tang Clan got they chamber," he says. "And you can ask RZA, man, he'll tell you, can't nobody fuck with the Fugees' chamber either, understand? We built our own sound, which is acoustic hip hop and live music combined. When you hear the Fugees sound, you know it."

Truly, *The Score* encompasses every aspect of modern black sonics, from Lauryn's artful singing of Roberta Flack's "Killing Me Softly With His Song" and Clef's raw rendition of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry" to the surreal, melodic screechiness of "Fu-Gee-La." And then there's the lyrical and conceptual complexity of "The Mask," a tune about the shells that we humans all hide behind. Each of them delivers something special to the trail mix: If hip hop were Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom*, Clef would be the cunning, strumming cheetah; Pras the boxing kangaroo with deadly punch lines; and Lauryn the black widow spider, killing MCs—but softly.

Lauryn and Clef are willingly cranking about a zillion radio drops for various commercial and underground radio shows. "One two, one two," says Clef into a crude tape recorder. "Ha! Refugees up in here on the Baby Blue mix tape, seen?" And without complaint, Lauryn wails her ass off, even when people treat her like a windup sing-along doll.

"I categorize L as the perfect black woman," says Mark Bennett (the Fu's assistant road manager and the self-proclaimed "garbage man" of this tour). "I'm not tryin' to ride dick, but she has knowledge, heart, and she definitely wears her intentions on her sleeve. She lets you know where she's coming from."

Upstairs in the dressing room, Lauryn is sipping on flaming honey water—the radio drops did catch up to her. "The record companies are gonna jump on the female MC thing right now because it's marketable," says a raspy Lauryn. "But I also think a lot of young women are coming into their own: Little Kim, Foxy Brown, Bahamadia—I just think it's time."

Hill dreams of the day when hip hop's women will be judged solely by their skills. "If you look good, and you rhyme, you get that much more props. If I had one eye lower than the other, I probably wouldn't be as dope as everyone claims I am." Lauryn

finds integrity to be an important part of the equation also. "I keep my clothes on, so I'm not emphasizing that part of me. I represent the anti-chicken-head. Right now, it's popular for women to promote this really dumb, money-hungry image. It's not healthy. We can't see the effects now, but that shit is gonna be painful later."

Two hours after our conversation, the Fugees step back onstage, destroy the sound barrier, and construct their own temple of boom. "I deflated one too many egos," raps L mid-routine. "...Callin' women bitches / When they mamas raised them solo." The Canadian crowd reacts with the enthusiasm of just-emancipated slaves, like American crowds do every time Clief freaks James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" on his electric guitar with his longhouse. A dreadlocked sister next to me clenches her fist, tight, like she has a winning lottery ticket—or like the Fugees, with all their vigor, are doing it just for her.

Detroit is an anesthetized city. But one of the better things about it on this day is the fact that Goodie MoB and Bahamadia have joined the tour. Goodie's first performance is just inches short of a full-blown religious experience. Kinda like Sly & the Family Stone circa 1969 meet Public Enemy circa 1988 by way of the Last Poets circa 1971—if you can imagine that.

"I just want people in their hearts and minds to appreciate the effort that we're trying to make," says Cee-Lo, soaking a towel with postperformance body sweat. "We're trying to make the show more entertaining—more free. Who I reach, I never know. All praises due to the Most High."

Detroit is also the place where the Roots and the Fugees finally reach an understanding. Wyclef kicks it with Kamal, the Roots' keyboardist, and addresses the cover-song friction that has been segregating the outfits. I've even gotten caught up—siding with the Fugees because of their tight-knit family atmosphere. The Fugees share food, they fight, they braid one another's hair. On the road to Chicago, where *everyone* will nip it, traveling with the Fugees is like rolling with my cousins on my Haitian side.

Chicago's sparkling, lakefront smile and stone architecture is an eye-pleasing change of scenery—and both Chicago shows are sold-out. We roll up to the venue, a 900-plus joint called the Park West. There's a stone dome over the center—looks like a giant kufi or yarmulke.

Goodie MoB are tardy, and so their sound check and their performance time are cut in half. They don't get as much money, either. "Goodie MoB, from southwest ATL," MoB front man Cee-Lo screams. "Country as hell, can't you tell? Even if the record don't sell." There are stirring guitars, congas, and the personality-oozing Cee-Lo, who commands every living creature within a mile of his voice.

Every voice in the place sings the hook from their almost combustible "Cell Therapy": "Who's that peekin' in my window? / *Pout!* / Nobody now!" Kids throw their finger guns in the air and aim 'em slyly at the stage.

Then the Roots plug in. After their final set of the

night, I finally meet B.R.O. THER ?, the Roots' Buddy Miles-looking drummer. "We were freestyling," says B.R.O. THER. "And to make it more entertaining, Tariq [a.k.a. Black Thought] pulls five people from the audience and rhymes about them. Then this guy jumps onstage and wants to battle Tariq. The guy gets onstage and says, 'How the fuck you come in my town and do all this?' But Tariq took him out freestyling, and had the crowd in the palm of his hand."

"When we first came on tour, we felt mad tension," adds B.R.O. THER. "I'm hearing shit like, 'Why are these people rolling around sayin' that's all bit they shit?' So there's been some confusion. It wasn't until last night, when we rapped with Wyclef. We put it straight to him: 'Yo, man, why do we feel that y'all is dissin' us?' And he explained that it's not that way. Being from Haiti, they're very close—closed-in, like a family. I'm glad that shit was put to rest."

"I love the Fugees' show," he says. "I like the chemistry. And you can tell they have love and respect for hip hop." And he's not mad at their chart topping, either. "I see it as success for them, and I see it as success for us," he says. "The only way the Roots will succeed is for people to get exposed to seeing live bands, and seeing people play old-school hip hop, and seeing people do a variety of things that isn't the usual grabbing your dick."

Groups like the Roots, the Fugees, and Goodie MoB are repairing hip hop's weak gangsta lean. That's what this tour is about—rejuvenating live performance, the backbone of hip hop. It's a facet of the culture that's been dead—"real" instruments notwithstanding—since KRS-One rocked New York's Union Square in 1987. In an age where deficient MCs get record deals before they've even rocked a party, a tour like this (as well as this summer's Black Lollapalooza, which will feature the Fugees along with Ziggy Marley) drums up real hope for the future.

And so the Fugees do their second show at Park West, a show on par with their victory in Montreal. L-Boogie blows like Mahalia Jackson on the cusp of heaven as lighters in the front row blaze. When she asks the peo-



Wyclef riding high

ple, a Tribe Called Quest-style, if she can "kick it," hundreds of voices answer, "Yes, you can."

Clief turns his back to the audience, a second later spinning toward his loving disciples with a white, *Friday the 13th*-style hockey mask, delivering a Jaseonesque shock that slugs everyone. It's all there: drama, intensity, community, harmony. You can see the world reflected in Pras's eyes as he gazes forward, mike in hand, swaying to the collective soundscapes that call his name.

Lauryn, Wyclef, and Prakazamalli fall out of the side door immediately afterward. Back to the bus, on to the next venue. And when I'm back at home, half-dead with the flu I picked up on the road, the Fugees are somewhere in America, rhyming, drumming, plucking chords, and changing the face of hip hop. □



Lauryn something just your choice



Pras practicing at the Omni Hotel in Detroit

Bahamadia getting and giving daa in Chicago

He's straight, single,
employed and sitting
in your living room.

Now what?



Dewar's



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DIANA KING

Chat 'bout

Imagine growing up with 15 siblings in a staunch Christian household where secular music is taboo. You spend nights with Aretha and Chaka on the down-low, their voices burning holes in your heart. If only you could sing like that at St. Philip's Baptist Church in Spanish town, Jamaica.

The Scorpio in you arises. Abandoning home, you run off with hopes of entertaining foreigners at the white-sand resorts of the North Coast. You spot a brethern whose band needs a lead singer for that night's gig. Your powerful vibrato belies your 14 years. Soon you're the darling of the tourist circuit, serving up spicy island versions of Dolly Parton, Whitney Houston, Aretha, Chaka, and yes, Brother Bob. You give them all a certain flavor: sexy growls simmered with a rasta DJ style no guy can test.

By 1994 you join Shabba Ranks's tour of Europe, singing duets with Mr. Loverman. Your seductive style bewitches an astute A&R rep, who invites you to contribute to the *Cool Runnings* soundtrack. Your sultry rendition of "Stir It Up" is immediately accepted; even skeptics agree that "Bob would've been pleased."

Then, in 1994, Columbia offers you a deal. You pen original lyrics for the first time and take a front seat in producing your album, *Tougher Than Love*. The first single, "Shy Guy," blows up big-time, paying tribute to "thoseirie brothers who never get them props."

The single sells millions worldwide, and now your wicked cover of Chaka's "Ain't Nobody" is all over radio and video.

Stardom hasn't changed you at all. You still prefer performing barefoot. Like your nine-year-old daughter, Shalamar, you can be coyly demure with a ragga-ragga edge. You're one sister who ain't representin' weaves, fake nails, and all that. No, you're a natural dawta who still enjoys cooking curry for friends and, of course, your shy guy back in Brooklyn.

You've taken reggae to that elusive "next level," but back home they sometimes call you a sellout. That gets you vexed: "Mi nah sell out nuttin'! Reggae inna mi blood. Mi jus' do weh mi waan do."

Such is the essence of the only queen with the name of a king. Diana ain't tryin' to be somebody she ain't. "Mi is jus' a Yardie. And mi love it. Seen?" Sharon Gordon



Be nice to us before we
go to the ladies room.
You will be discussed.

VIRGINIA SLIMS
It's a woman
thing.



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Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

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LAND O SOUL

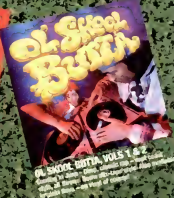
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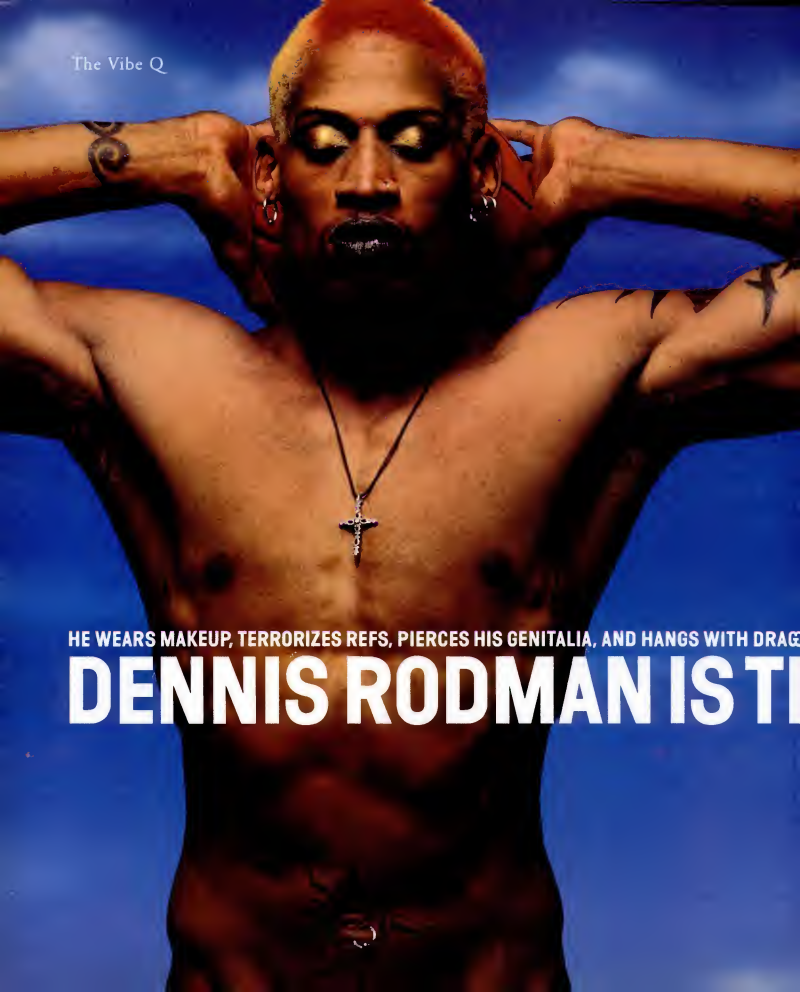
S is For Smooth.

Whatever style
whatever groove.
S-Curl Texturizer's
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S-CURL

IT'S ON.

A full-page photograph of Dennis Rodman in drag. He is shirtless, wearing a dark bra, a thin chain with a cross pendant, and heavy eye makeup. His arms are raised behind his head, and he has multiple tattoos and piercings. The background is a bright blue sky with light clouds.

The Vibe Q

HE WEARS MAKEUP, TERRORIZES REFS, PIERCES HIS GENITALIA, AND HANGS WITH DRAG

DENNIS RODMAN IS T



QUEENS. HE'S ALSO HELPING THE BULLS MAKE NBA HISTORY. MOVE OVER, HOWARD STERN,

THE REAL SHOCK JOCK

BY SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

Dennis Rodman's roots are showing. His fading blond hair clashing against a soft green leather jacket, a pair of big dark shades effectively blocking out his eyes, Rodman looks more like a rock star on tour than an athlete-god in a city that takes its athlete-gods very seriously. After a long workout following a humiliating late-season loss to the New York Knicks—the Chicago Bulls' seventh defeat of the season—his knees are taped with huge plastic bags of ice, condensing in the heat of his massive Ford F350 Crew Cab pickup. Rodman's on his way to a seafood joint in north suburban Chicago, Pearl Jam pumping through the speakers,

his Birkenstock sandals slipped off and sliding around as he drives barefoot.

Sometimes he mumbles into the cellular phone attached to the dashboard or sings along to the Eddie Vedder lyrics. When he actually talks, it is always in controlled, southern-fried tones. Dennis Rodman never raises his voice even when he threatens to be drowned out by shouting fans or CD noise. He seems so in control, it's as if the guy in the Bulls No. 91 jersey is someone else entirely, like the basketball court is his stage, and night now he's an actor between rehearsals. Perhaps he doesn't act crazy because there's enough craziness around him. Perhaps craziness isn't even the word. Perhaps it's just hysteria, plain old center-of-the-hurricane superstar stuff.

After picking up his girlfriend, Stacy, a striking, petite blond, at a chic gym in downtown Chicago, we pick up another beautiful blond—one of Rodman's best friends since relocating to Chicago—who's taking Stacy shopping. Turns out she's a female impersonator—Rodman will correct you if you refer to her as a drag queen. Can't say I know many basketball-playing superstars who drill with female impersonators, or who wear women's clothes to the MTV awards, but that's Dennis.

While we browse in Betsey Johnson's boutique ("Nothing for you here, Dennis," I tell him. "She cuts her things way too small"), a black woman who runs a homeless shelter comes in and asks him to stop by the center a few blocks away to impart some words of wisdom to the kids there. We go. Rodman barely speaks, but he doesn't have to. The kids and workers at Open Door Ministry do all the talking and laughing and shouting as Rodman poses for pictures and tickles a lit-

tle baby under the chin. He smiles affably, warmly even, and his smile speaks enough support.

An hour or so later, in 9th Floor, a hip little clothing store featuring leatherwear, funny hats, and everything else edgy, Dennis Rodman runs into Cynthia Plaster Caster, of the 1960s rock-star Plaster Casters—the legendary groupies who have Jimi Hendrix's penis (among others) immortalized in plaster. Guess what she wants to do to Dennis? He does a sheepish grin and a shy retreat, as if he doesn't completely understand the request. But he does. You can see him filing away the invitation as he sorts through a pile of fancy hats stacked near the counter.

All of this in a two-hour period. And I haven't even mentioned the screaming kids or the giant Rodman mural along the Kennedy Expressway that was removed because it was causing too many traffic jams, or the women who periodically whipped magazines out of their bags—a September *Bulls* magazine and a January *Playboy* featuring a bare-butted Dennis—for his signature. This is March, mind you, and they're still carrying those magazines around. People want a piece of Dennis Rodman.

Soon they'll have a whole book to carry around. With *Bad As I Wanna Be* (Delacorte Press), a sorta-memoir, sorta-world-according-to-Worm guidebook, Rodman meets his voracious public head-on. Written in a fast-paced conversational style, the book is chock-full of grist for the gossip mill: "[Madonna] wouldn't let me wear a condom—NEVER....She would send me faxes that said, 'I want every drop of your come inside me.' " ... "I want to play my last game in the NBA in the nude." But *Bad As I Wanna Be* also details the thinking of a man

who found himself, on more than one occasion, imagining the end of his life very clearly.

The book (Rodman's first autobiography) is a vivid catalog of past lives lost: Rodman as product of the Dallas projects, a lone son who literally had to crawl through shit to find some fun (the sewer was a cheap route to the local amusement park). Rodman as low-paid airport worker who got arrested for stealing watches from an airport gift shop, only to lead the cops to the people he *gave* the watches to. Rodman as recent B-ball recruit at Southeastern Oklahoma, the small-town college where townies repeatedly called him nigger. And Rodman as disgruntled about-to-be-former Detroit Piston, who, lied to by management, left by his coach, estranged from his wife and baby daughter, found himself in his pickup truck with a rifle in his lap, deciding whether to take his own life.

Instead, he made a new life—painted a new picture, so to speak. What he says about the tattoos and piercings (from nose to navel to scrotum) that now decorate his body is this: It's just how he expresses himself. Others say he's trying to hide some shame, some dissatisfaction with himself. But talking to Dennis Rodman, you get the feeling he has nothing to hide, that he really wants to tell everything—contradictions and all—as a kind of cleansing process, perhaps. Of course he wants to shock. Why else would he stress me about some gay joint in Chicago where the video porn is so nasty? Why else would he insist on going to a club called the Crobar on bondage night of all nights? Move over, Howard Stern—Dennis Rodman is the *real* shock jock.

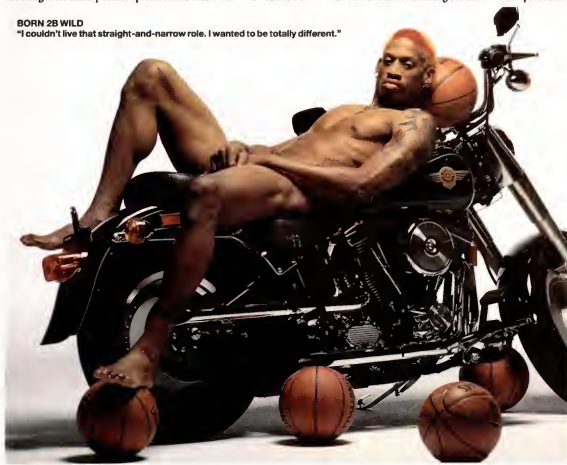
This March, night in the heat of the Bulls' drive for an unprecedented 70-win season, the surprisingly well-behaved Dennis Rodman let loose with the greatest sin of them all: Duing a dispute (over silly technical foul calls), he head-butted a referee. Then in the locker room after the game, the press witnessed Dennis putting the NBA brass to a dare. "If I butted him, I butted him....You're so big, suspend me." *Uh-oh*, the word circulated, the old Dennis has reared his ugly multihued head. Flashbacks to flagrant fouls and sideline solo scenes—Dennis was becoming that thing that finally pushed him off the San Antonio Spurs: a "distraction."

Bottom line: a six-game suspension and almost a quarter of a million dollars in lost salary and fines. Rodman's real sin, though, may have been angering Michael Jordan, who was leading the Bulls to a history-making season. But the raging competitor within Dennis Rodman's tattooed, pierced body is as eager to win it all as any of his Chicago teammates—and while he's at it, to pick up his fifth consecutive rebounding title. Still, he's dogged by history—his own—a reputation built on lateness and poutiness as much as on his stellar achievements on the court.

Is he the resident bad seed of the NBA family, the perfect antithesis to, say, Grant Hill's noble goodness (or is that Godness)? Is he the spoiled elder statesman with two championship rings from his Detroit Pistons

BORN 2B WILD

"I couldn't live that straight-and-narrow role. I wanted to be totally different."





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THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY.

days, who's as bored and recalcitrant as the league itself seems to be? Or is he (melodramatic strings rushing in here) off-the-hook crazy, an out-of-control busy signal buzzing in a sea of well-mannered call-waiting hoopers? Dennis Rodman might be all of the above and then some. But crazy? Nah. An attention grabber, to be sure, but from this vantage, sanely so. An individualist in a team sport, a vaunted role player who found himself a maligned superstar. Consider this, though, and consider it well: Rodman became a superstar on his terms in his way, without a publicist, before he had an endorsement to his name. Just good old sex appeal, honest talk, and headstrong behavior that some find excruciating.

It is a conscious pursuit for him: the man as his own best project, the self as spiritual journey. It's heroic yet down-to-earth, pretentious in presentation, and seasoned with a dash of willful naïveté. Playing it out on one of the biggest stages there is, Dennis Rodman is keeping it real in a way most folks can only dream about.

Are you a troublemaker?

I think of myself as a hardworking individual that's living in a wacky and make-believe world.

Someone said once that maybe we're all insane and you're the sane one.

Everyone's crazy in some sense of the word; they just don't express those feelings outside of the confines of their homes.

Don't you think you intimidate people with your behavior? Can they deal with your difference?

Oh, a lot of people are afraid. They appreciate me doing things because I have the balls and the guts to do them. Someone just told me that they live vicariously through my aura. That don't give-a-damn attitude. No one's gonna fuck with you. [Laughing] But everything I do, I do with good intentions. On the outside it might seem bad, but on the inside it's good. I don't want people to feel sorry for me. I just want people to understand where I'm comin' from. And in this world of make-believe, folks don't understand there are people who are just different.

In your book you say that you consciously changed your image when you got out of Detroit.

I had to change something about the way I felt about myself and the NBA life. When I came into the league, I didn't know anything, so I followed those guidelines for the first six, seven years. But the more I studied it—and Dennis Rodman as a person—I realized that that wasn't really me. I couldn't live that straight-and-narrow role. I had to create something that balanced my whole life out, mainly in terms of basketball.

But you contradict yourself. You say on one hand that if NBA commissioner David Stern could, he wouldn't have you in the league, but then you say they need you because you make money for them.

They play both sides of the fence. They think if I wasn't such a hot commodity or advertising genius, they wouldn't have my ass in here. If I was just a regular basketball player, they'd find a way to get me outta here. I'm not stupid. I'm a target.

You make yourself a target, don't you?

Not really. But as I said, I wanted to change something, to be totally different from most athletes.

But can you be "totally different" and also be the real

Dennis Rodman at the same time?

Now I am. I wouldn't change for nothing in the world. It was a long time coming, but I was just waiting for the right moment to do it. And once it happened, you keep going and you think, Hell, it's working.

You talk a lot about the corporate nature of the NBA. That continues to frustrate you.

Very much so.

You feel like players sell their souls.

They do. They play that game that they don't have to play.

For example?

Like Grant Hill and the Rookie of the Year situation. He was accepted before he even got to the NBA. They gave him that trophy before he even played a game. I'm not knocking Grant Hill; it's not his fault. But if I was one of those rookies, I wouldn't have accepted the trophy. There's just too much pressure to be what other people want you to be and not what you want to be.

"I'M NOT SUICIDAL. BUT WHEN I FEEL MY LIFE IS COMPLETE, I'LL DRIVE SOMEWHERE IN MY PICKUP, VISUALIZE EVERYTHING, THEN REALIZE IT'S BEEN ONE HELLUVA RIDE AND NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE MYSELF OUT."

You set goals and standards, but you lose all your independence.

That's terrifying to you, isn't it?

Oh yeah. Independence is the most important thing for a person, especially an athlete or a person with money. You have that barricade around you where no one can come in. But everyone knows it's about money, the bottom line. You go around this league, all you hear about is money: I want this or I want that. But no one understands what you have to give up to get that.

In your book, you tell players to "care about the game," and you sound crazy passionate.

I always say I'd play for 100 bucks. You don't think about money as you play the game of basketball. A lot of these rookies, all they talk about is \$20 million, not the game.

Yeah, but the argument becomes, These are brothers who gotta take care of their families and all that.

They'll take care of the family in time, man. But you

should take care of yourself first, in the sense that you become strong-minded in a way that your family won't fuck you over. The first thing they teach you in the NBA is, Beware of families and girlfriends, anybody who wants a handout. A lot of guys don't understand. But definitely take care of your mother. That's first. Everything else? Nah.

Who else do you think is independent like you?

Not many.

Barkley?

No.

Pippen? Jordan?

In some ways. They're both pretty independent, outspoken people.

But you could argue that at their level, they can be that way because of who they are.

Money's power, and power's money.

I was talking more about talent. Neither one of them is close to being one of the top-paid players.

Oh, they will be. M.J. will be the highest paid athlete in the history of all teams.

There's all this talk about the huge free-agent market at the end of this season. They mention Reggie Miller, Shaq, Jordan, Juwan Howard. But I never hear your name.

That's what I'm sayin'. There's two different circles. I'd never be mentioned with those folks. They pretty much regard me as a dumb-ass, a nuclear bomb waiting to go off. But at the same time, they know I make money for the NBA.

In the age of the slam dunk, are your skills taken for granted?

I think I'm respected by players in this league for what I believe in, what I stand up for. I've been put up against the wall with my hands behind my back while people threw daggers at me. I may look to be dead or seriously wounded, but when they wake up the next morning, I'm still here.

What do you bring to a team?

Intensity. Desire. The will to not lose. I want you to believe that I have your back when we're on the court. I've always been that way my whole life. I work my ass off every day. [Former Pistons coach] Chuck Daly knew that. I committed myself to be a role player. A lot of players don't do that, don't sit down and beat themselves up to figure out how to be an integral part to their team.

Would you like to stay in Chicago?

If I do, great. If I don't, fine. I'd like to.

It sounds like you have no sense of team loyalty. Although considering your past experience, I think I might understand your cynicism.

I don't have any confidence in anybody's good faith. No one can really sell Dennis Rodman. It's become hard for me to look people in the eye. That's why I wear glasses like this. I've been lied to, cheated, righted to my face. By management, by people in all walks of life. I know that what I'm hearing is not really real. I was lied to in San Antonio [playing for the Spurs], and it caused a lot of animosity between me and the team.

But you would agree that you didn't handle yourself in the best possible way down there?

I handled myself in the best way I knew how. I don't believe I distracted that team. They did that to themselves by making themselves feel that what I was doing was so bad. I didn't fight anybody or kill anybody or say anything to the papers. What'd I do? I came late a

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couple times. Took my shoes off 'cause my feet hurt. It wasn't a big deal. But they made such a big deal out of everything that everyone jumped on the bandwagon. I became this big distraction. What I've done in Chicago is the same thing I've always done, just in different circumstances and situations. I saved San Antonio's ass. They were 43-6 when I was a starter. What can you say about that?

When you realized you were going to Chicago, did the altercation between you and Scottie Pippen from back in the day come up?

Nah, we didn't discuss it. Would have been inappropriate to discuss it at the time. That's something San Antonio would have done. You just move on. In San Antonio, they're just gettin' over the fact that they just stopped ridin' in buggies and they're not ridin' horses. In Chicago they understand what I'm doing. They understand controversy too. They want that kind of thing. It drives them. They say, "He's a wild guy." Because it keeps the people interested. Motivated.

I can't see Phil Jackson pulling Madonna into the locker room like John Lucas did in San Antonio.

Exactly. They begged me for months to bring Madonna to a game. It only became a distraction when the game didn't go well. I wish I had a videotape of that—John Lucas went off the court and grabbed her. And they were all behaving like little kids and shit, taking pictures.

That reminds me. You don't perform oral sex, Dennis?

Is that going in the magazine? Well, in the book you wrote that you wouldn't go down on Madonna.

Damn. [He blushes]

You can't deny that sexuality is part of what makes you the superstar you are. You've even gone on record as saying you're probably bisexual. Have you acted on it?

You know, every so often you think about someone of the same sex. Anyone who says they don't think about it is lying, 'cause they do.

So why haven't you acted on it?

It's not my calling at this particular time. You can't just say, Fuck, I'm gonna do it and see if I like it. You gotta do it 'cause that's what you feel.

So you don't feel any backlash from other players like they might not like to be dressing in the same rooms where someone might be attracted to them? Or do you not find basketball players attractive?

Basketball players are very sculpted with nice physiques. You gotta say, That guy has a nice body. That doesn't make you a fag. It's just a compliment.

But a lot of men would be scared to compliment another man like that.

It's not my intention to go in the locker room and think some guy has a big dick. [Laughs] I'm not, like, looking forward to dating a man or something like that. But the option's always there.



IT TAKES BALLS
"I've been put up against the wall while people throw daggers at me, but I'm still here."

Given the homophobia in sports, isn't the mere fact that you're saying this a way of courting disaster?

I don't give a fuck. You can't shut anything out.

You have a lot of female impersonators for friends. What is it about drag queens that you find so attractive? Or do you like them for the people they are first, and the drag queens they are second?

I like that they're taking chances in life and hoping everyone accepts them.

Well, you could be considered a drag queen in a way, right? It wouldn't hurt.

So is this Dennis the Free Spirit talking, or Dennis talking for shock value to sell books?

Look, you have to experience a lot of different things in your life to make your life complete. It's hard to enjoy your life when it's just one-sided. You gotta go on the other side.

You've said you don't identify with black culture, that your friends called you a white black man.

That's based on the fact that I don't just hang around with black people.

Why not identify with the culture?

Probably because I'm not so deep into it—the Million Man March and all that. I know what things are; I don't need anyone to preach to me. I know what's goin'

on, whether I fuck with the black man or white man.

So the women you date, the music you listen to, it's more just a Dennis Rodman lifestyle.

As for the music, black artists just wanna sell records. Most R&B I can't feel. I mean, you get the beat and the bass and all that, but that doesn't stimulate you. Pearl Jam has a message where you really feel what they're talkin' about.

They called you a nigger when you were in school. How did that affect you?

I wanted to be accepted. I didn't think I had to be a white man. I would have been frustrated to do that. I would have been like Michael Jackson.

You even said in the book that you'd like to be back there in the projects sometimes. Isn't that one way you do identify with black culture? Lots of black folks who blow up, and get fame and money, feel guilty for succeeding.

I think I feel guilty that I took away from all my friends who I used to play basketball against. They were so much more talented than I was. All of those guys should have made it.

You say you're not comfortable being comfortable. Why not?

I'm always on the alert to feel that my life is gonna come to an end.

You don't mean your NBA life...

Nah, not that. I can walk away from the game easy, without any regrets. I mean more about death. I'm always reaching to work my ass off, 'cause I'm die happy, not sad. I'm gonna die the way I wanna die. I always say there's only two ways I'm gonna die: on the court, or alone somewhere. Which brings us to suicide.

I'm not really suicidal. I do think everyone is at some point in their lives but they don't go through with it.

So when you talk in the book about going to that mountain and taking yourself out when it's time to go—

What I said was, when I feel that my life is totally complete and I have nothing else to live for, I think I'll take whatever I need, drive in my pickup to wherever I feel I need to be, sit there, visualize everything, and look at it. Then realize that it was one helluva ride for Dennis Rodman and now it's time to take myself out.

That's definitely romantic in a swashbuckling sort of way. But how do you reconcile that death wish with the love you have for your seven-year-old daughter, Alexis—watching her grow up?

I would teach my kids what I'd been thinking. Kids are very smart and forgiving, especially when it comes from their own. They'll take it with ease and know what their father wants.

You think of life as a big project, don't you?

It's one big circle. You start at the top, then go around the globe, and you're bound to make some pit stops somewhere. I'm so beyond people talking about bullshit that you should already know. Most people don't train their minds and souls to expect the unexpected, to accept the unexpected as something good. ■



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A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace in bed. The woman, with curly hair, is looking up at the man. The man is looking down at her. They are both smiling. The background is a soft, warm light. The text is overlaid on the image.

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BELIEVE IT'S

SAFER SEX.

FEELING IS BELIEVING.



KEISHA, KIMA, AND PAM
"I don't care if people don't think
we're great singers," says Pam.



First they were just Biggie's background singers. Now with their slammin' debut album, Total prove they are definitely more than the sum of their parts. By Michael A. Gonzales

On the West Side of Chicago, a chilly wind blows a small American flag. It's tied to a rusty gate in front of Westinghouse Vocational High School. Two-thirds of Total step from a van onto the dead grass. Dressed in high heels and tight leather gear, Kima (with the long hair) and Keisha (with the short skirts) have definitely arrived. Pam (with the hard stare) is home in New Jersey, recovering from oral surgery. All three are too young to be divas, and too old to be little girls.

"It's freezing out here," Keisha says, wrapping herself in a black Persian lamb coat. Total have come to the Windy City to perform as part of a local Say in School program, and excited teenagers, gathered in the gym, are screaming loud enough that we can hear them on the street.

In a drab room that smells of old tennis shoes, Keisha is in the mirror, smoothing her baby hair down. "We like performing for the kids," Kima says, like she's 100 years old and has been singing for decades. "We want them to know we haven't forgotten about them."

Suddenly, rapper Da Brat breezes in with a small white dog that Keisha and Kima coo at. Brat smiles like a proud mama at a hip hop family reunion. This is her hometown, but she's not here to chill, she's here to work. Keisha and Kima are about to rock their Top 10 R&B single "No One Else," on which Brat drops a feral guest spot. The song comes from Total's glam, eponymous debut. Combining sleek jeep beats with the fly-ghetto chic that their mentor/producer, Puffy Combs, and manager/stylist, Sybil Pennix, pioneered with Mary J. Blige and Faith Evans, Total add a freaky, younger, offbeat flavor to the new jill swing Kool-Aid.

"I feel like I was raised twice," says Kima, now brushing her adult hair. "By my mother, who raised me to have morals, then again by Puffy and Sybil, who taught us to deal with the craziness of this business. If you don't have people to keep you in the right direction, you'll be messed up."

Total may never steal the vocal crown from Blige, but that's okay with them. "It doesn't bother me if people think we aren't great singers," says Pam via telephone. "At least they're thinking of us enough to talk about Total." Puffy may have felt that way when the stylish crew bum-rushed him in the elevator of New York's Hit Factory in 1993. "We made up a song while sitting in our manager's car," says Keisha, whose cinnamon-hued face, complete with MAC-cd-out lips, resembles a Kewpie doll. "We sang something with Puffy's name in it—we already had the Bad Girl attitude."

Which they've been cultivating for a while. Kima and Keisha have known each other since they were teenagers performing in musical programs at Plainfield High School in New Jersey. They didn't hook up with Pam until a few years later. "They seemed real prissy," Pam says of her partners, "and I was ghetto-style. At first I didn't like them." They were introduced by a sound engineer at a recording studio while working on demos. "Now," Pam says, "we're like sisters."

Puffy recruited Total to sing background vocals on the Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 "Juicy," as well as "One More Chance." It wasn't until 1995, when the trio recorded the hypnotic "Can't You See" for the *New Jersey Drive* soundtrack, that Total grew some funk of their own. The song was a No. 1 R&B hit, and the girls' world turned upside down. "I had just got on salary at a computer company," says Keisha. "But they were getting tired of me saying, 'I can't come in. I've been in the studio till 7 this morning.'"

Fortunately, flying out to the West Coast to work with producer/singer Raphael Saadiq (of Tony Toni Toné) on their current single, "Kissin' You," proved to be an enchanting experience. "We recorded the tracks in three days, and the rest of the time we shopped, ate, and bowled," says Kima. "Raphael made sure we were comfortable."

Now, though, comfortable or not, it's show time. Gliding in on a beat pirated from BDP's 1987 classic "South Bronx," 67 percent of Total sing into portable mikes as Da Brat revs up the crowd. Happy boys with goofy expressions bob their heads to Total's DAT. Keisha and Kima don't sound great—but they sound good enough for this house. Besides, the girls' nonchalant, you-know-you-want-me vibe is enough to get the crowd hyped. "Everybody has naughty ways," Keisha says later of their sensual performance. No doubt these girls are naughty—by nature. ☐

Like, Totally Awesome



PREACH, REVEREND

"The children in rap music say, 'Let's get down,'" says Rev. Green. "But here in the church, we say, 'Let's go up.'"

LOVE AND HAPPINESS

Before he gave his life totally to Christ, Al Green was the King of Soul. While we make myth of his old jams, Green is mending his own heart—and stirring more souls than ever.
By Alan Light. Photographs by Dana Lixenberg

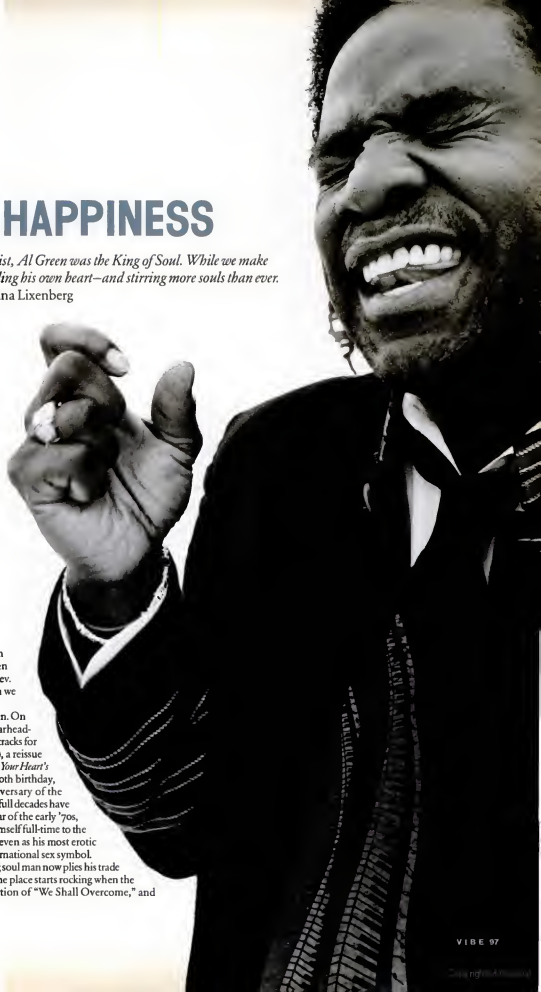
To get to the Full Gospel Tabernacle church from downtown Memphis, keep driving a few minutes past Grace-land on Elvis Presley Boulevard. You'll find Hale Road at the cluster of fast-food joints—take a right between the Red Lobster and the Church's Fried Chicken. Go through a few blocks of working-class ranch houses with slightly scrubby lawns. Look for a gray stone sign in front of number 787, there on the left: FULL GOSPEL TABERNACLE, REVEREND AL GREEN, PASTOR.

The sanctuary is a pleasant, 1970s-style space. An eight-sided ceiling slopes skyward to a center point, the walls are brick, the carpet deep blue. Against the back wall, there's a curious, crudely rendered painting: A city skyline at the moment of apocalypse. Cars are flipped over and smashed into one another on the highway. An airplane has slammed into the side of a building. Souls float heavenward from the wreckage, flying up to meet a smiling white Jesus, arms outstretched in the center of the sky.

But there will be no fire and brimstone on this warm February morning. "The children in rap music say, 'Let's get down!'" cries the Rev. Al Green. "But here in the Christian church we say, 'Let's go up!'"

This year holds two landmarks for Al Green. On top of a recent resurgence in visibility—spearheaded by his inclusion on the best-selling soundtracks for *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Dead Presidents* (1995), a reissue series of his classic albums, and last year's fine *Your Heart's in Good Hands* album—this April 13 was his 50th birthday, and December 19 will mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Full Gospel Tabernacle. Two full decades have passed since Green, the biggest black pop star of the early '70s, bought this church and decided to devote himself full-time to the Pentecostal religion that always called him, even as his most erotic compositions were turning him into an international sex symbol.

The Tabernacle is where the greatest living soul man now plies his trade every Sunday (except when he's touring). The place starts rocking when the 18-voice choir offers up a funkified rendition of "We Shall Overcome," and



about an hour into the two-and-a-half-hour service, folks start getting happy, falling out in the aisles, shouting and shimmying.

One massive woman in a boxy white dress gets caught up in the rapture, heaves herself to her feet, and commences speaking an unearthly language. Her neighbors help her to the rear of the church and fan her back to this world. "She's just shouting out her problems," says Green from the pulpit. "She won't hurt nobody." (When

nouncements, snippets of songs that briefly unleash that mind-melting voice, as well as constant, direct instruction to glorify Jesus. "Somebody shout 'Holy Ghost power!'" he commands.

"If everybody at the gas station was shouting in the spirit," he says, "you wouldn't be afraid to look over your shoulder and see who's coming up behind you!" Maybe this refers to some local incident, maybe it doesn't even make sense—but it draws a holler from the worshippers.

and she'd go on at 10:00, then she'd go on for her second show at 1:00 in the morning. It's 3:30 before she comes through the door. So I wrote a song called 'Tired of Being Alone'—that's what sparked that.

"I started to go over to Motown to meet this guy named Berry Gordy, and I was saying, 'This guy isn't going to know me anyway, so what difference does it make? So I went to Ike Turner, who was in Los Angeles then, to write some songs with him.'"

"I'M STILL GROWING. AND I'M WAITING TO GET A CH

I compare notes with a friend who visited the church two weeks earlier, it turns out that this same woman went through the same experience at the same point in that meeting.)

There are only about 15 tourists and fans here to check out the legendary Al Green. They are scattered among the regular, local congregation of 175 or so, but the Rev. Green doesn't shy away from making the visitors part of the ceremonies. He works the sanctuary, an odd mix of cleric and game show host, smiling and slim, a sheer scarf covered with gold musical notes draped over his lapels. Wandering the aisles with a microphone, he asks unfamiliar faces to announce where they're from and praises God for the fact that so many have traveled so far to be here.

Green's Morning Message—like his concerts or, for that matter, his conversations—is rambling, amiable, very nonlinear. He weaves in homilies, church an-

For years, he says, the church establishment refused to accept his (determinedly nondenominational) commitment to Christ. Old-school religious powers had trouble believing that the man who made 1973's "Let's Get Married" sound like a lewd proposition could cut it as a man of the cloth. But according to Green—who has now spent about twice as long serving as a preacher than as a hitmaker—his fellow ministers are showing signs of warming up at last. "You wouldn't spend 20 years in anything if you weren't serious about it," he says, laughing. "It's true about one person said about me: 'Either the guy is serious about what he's doing or he's a damn fool.'"

The lobby of the Peabody Hotel, they say, is where the Mississippi Delta begins. It's a study in southern luxury, with a large bar, ornate marble fountain, and a bizarre daily ritual in which five ducks march down a red carpet to the fountain every morning and then back to the elevator that leads to their "Duck Palace" each night (a procession that draws hundreds of onlookers seven days a week).

The Peabody is three blocks from Beale Street, where W.C. Handy gave birth to the blues; catty-corner from the studios of WDIA, the first radio station in the country with an all-black format (where B.B. King and Rufus Thomas were once DJs); and straight down Union Avenue from the manger called Sun Studios, where Elvis—and Jerry Lee Lewis, Howlin' Wolf, Roy Orbison—brought that blues tradition together with some country-and-western wailing and created a whole new mess called rock 'n' roll.

It is in a room at the Peabody that Al Green asks to do his interviews. Despite his easy laugh, he is an intensely private man who refuses to tell his publicist his home address, and won't answer questions about his wife and children. In a city drenched in musical history, at a spot so central to the region's past, it's easy to forget that this Memphis institution didn't actually arrive in the city until he was in his twenties.

Born in the nearby small town of Forrest City, Ark., Green moved north with his family and grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich., listening to the Soul Stirrers and James Brown but also to Elvis. ("I always loved Elvis—and the Lovin' Spoonful, the Carpenters, and all those average-white-band groups," he says.) But after making his first national impact with a No. 5 R&B hit called "Back Up Train" in 1967, Green would also pass through some legendary, fertile soul territories before coming back down South and setting the world on fire.

"I was wanting to come to Memphis," he says, "but I was living in Detroit. The Temptations lived downstairs, the Four Tops...we all hung out together, but we never did anything musically. Now, my girlfriend worked at a club, see, and that was a problem. She was a dancer

Green leans back in the chair and continues in his loopy, lilting way. "Ike heard about me through Teenie [Hodges], my guitar player. Ike said, 'Bring this guy in. I heard this new cat can write songs.' So I went out to California and sat around for four, five days watching him and Tina and all them rehearse. They were, like, 'This guy can't write no songs, man, get him out of here!' So I came back to Memphis and said to [producer] Willie Mitchell, 'I wanna sing this song.' And he says, 'Well, what is it?' And I said, 'It's called "Tired of Being Alone." It came out and was a million seller.' Green chuckles at the memory. "Ike called after about six months and said, 'Hey, bring him back, bring him back!'"

That song, released in 1971, catapulted Green to superstardom and began his affiliation with Hi Records and a brilliant Memphis studio team led by Mitchell and visionary drummer Al Jackson. Along with Green's vocal intensity came a reputation for eccentricity. "I was a little kid," he says. "I weighed 140 pounds, wore hot pants, long pirate-type boots up to here, and I had Jimi Hendrix beads on. I was a little squirt. I didn't know I could get smashed like a bug."

But the only smashing that went on was what Green began to do to the charts. After "Tired," he started a hit streak unprecedented in R&B—seven Top 10 hits in three years, including the follow-up, "Let's Stay Together," which topped both the R&B and pop charts. His aching, celine falsetto was unlike anything music had ever heard: Green's mastery and control of his natural, ultrasonic vocal gift created a persona more vulnerable than Otis Redding, more down-home than Marvin Gaye—as close to irresistible as anyone since his idol, Sam Cooke.

And yet, as with Cooke, religion and tragedy always simmered just beneath the surface. Green (who dropped the last e from his family name) had been thrown out of his family's gospel quartet, the Greene Brothers, for listening to Jackie Wilson records, but as early into his new pop life as 1973, he concluded his masterpiece, *Call Me*, with a wrenching original song titled "Jesus Is Waiting." In Memphis in October 1974, at the peak of his hit-making years, Mary Woodson, an ex-girlfriend whom Green refused to marry, scalded him with a pot of boiling grits—an impossibly perfect metaphor for the perils of the Southern Soul Man—and then shot and killed herself with his gun.

He spent the next few years looking for a ministry and grappling with the two sides of his singing and himself. In 1977, on the majestic "Belle," he sang to the woman of the song's title. "It's you I want, but it's I Him that I need." With just that one line, he summed up the fundamental underlying tension in all black pop. Then, during a 1979 concert in Cincinnati, Green fell off a dimly lit stage and wound up in the hospital. He took it as a sign.



With Aretha Franklin at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opening gala, Cleveland, 1985

In Burbank, Calif., circa 1973

"That was a weird night," he says softly. "I was shook up pretty good, but I was okay. Went back to the show that same night and sang for two more hours. I wouldn't stop singing." He felt he was being spoken to, perhaps visited by the Holy Spirit, and only speaks of the incident in vague, mystical terms: "It was the marking of time for the whole scope of life. Where they took that

think they're good, but I still don't think they're the best they can be. I think I may be coming more into my own."

In a Downtown Manhattan recording studio, Al Green is recording a version of "Love and Happiness," perhaps his most perfect song, for a guest appearance on *New York Undercover*. James Mtume, the show's

NANCE TO REALLY, REALLY SING."

sponge, took that atoning blood, filled the whole sponge, and wiped that slate clean. I have never been the same since."

After that, Green gave himself over to his religion, recording only gospel records for 18 years. Much was made of the fact that *Your Heart's in Good Hands* was his first "secular" album in all that time, but ultimately the distinction seems insignificant. "We're sewing a quilt," he says, "and if I sew one pattern over here and another pattern over here, it's not like they're not related." In other words, everything Al Green sings now, whether nominally addressed to a woman or to his Lord, is about celebration and love. What the new songs *don't* have is the simmering lust and longing that characterized early hits like 1973's "Here I Am (Come and Take Me)"—and minus that element of physical craving, Green could switch "baby" back to "Jesus" on most of these songs and you'd hardly notice.

His concert appearances, meanwhile, are notoriously erratic. One hears of epic performances, but shows like the one he gave last year at New York's Beacon Theater seem more typical: Green sang for a fleeting 45 minutes, with flashes of brilliance mixed in between sing-alongs. Then he sent his band out to play an encore without him. "When he leaves the stage, he's gone," says Arthur Baker, who executive produced *Your Heart's in Good Hands*. "People are still out front clapping, and he's in the car. The word *encore* is not in his vocabulary."

The irony is that Green's conversion may have resulted in an inevitable sanitizing of his song selection and songwriting, but the power and the glory of his voice cannot be repressed, and it's impossible to predict when its majestic complexity will break through—on record, in church, or onstage. And when he consciously lets loose, as he did in a devastating performance at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opening gala last fall, it is truly spine-chilling.

Al Green's true challenge remains the singing itself. "I'm waiting to get a chance to really, really sing," he says. "It's very, very difficult to sing something like 'I'm Still in Love With You'—those songs will fool you. They sound like they're sung real high, and in fact they're really low. So I'm still growing. I've got a lot of good songs that I have sung. I

musical director (and a veteran of Miles Davis's band, who also had a hit in 1983 with "Juicy Fruit"), is behind the boards. Green, clad in a red-and-black leather jacket, jeans, and Nike Air Trainers, is on take four, and it's hard to imagine his voice sounding any better. He swoops low, releases a piercing falsetto shriek, literally leaps from a whisper to a scream with stunning control.

"I'm just starting to feel it!" he yelps as Mtume sends him back behind the mike once more, looking to make a composite out of the best parts (which will wreak havoc on Green's attempts at lip-synching during the show's taping). Just when it seems Green can't go any deeper into the song, he changes up and delivers a smoldering, slower version. He paces between takes as Mtume whispers to the studio onlookers, "These are the moments you live for."

It seems odd watching Green push himself so hard for a brief TV appearance after witnessing him walk through high-profile, big-ticket concerts, but tonight he is clearly feeling the spirit—whether it's sacred or physical in origin, who knows or cares? Passion drips from every word of the song's last verse:

*Love will make you do right
Love will make you do wrong
Make you come home early
Make you stay out all night long*

Finally, Mtume is satisfied, sweating, beaming. The producer asks for one last thing from the singer. He plays a funky little vamp for Green to improvise over; it will be used for fills during the scene. Green goes back behind the glass, and again he is instantly transported—moaning, howling, whooping, swaying. Out of this mesmerizing, wordless testimony, one discernible phrase emerges:

"I believe in love!"

And the Rev. Al Green throws his head back, claps his hands, and smiles. □



SHERYL SWOOPES

More than hoops

Don't call her a tomboy. "It's a stereotype that you have to look masculine in order to be a good basketball player," says 25-year-old U.S.A. Women's National Team star Sheryl Denise Swoopes-Jackson. "I'm tired of that. Outside of basketball, I like to get my hair and nails done, wear makeup and nice clothes." But watching the quick off-the-dribble moves of the six-foot forward/guard, it's easy to see how fans could be duped by preconceived notions. Even Michael Jordan was caught off guard. After she battled him one-on-one, His Airness told Swoopes, "Girl, you can play."

Case in point: The Brownfield, Texas native scored 47 points to help Texas Tech beat Ohio State 84-62 in the final game of the 1993 Women's NCAA Championship. The sneaker gods at Nike took notice, bestowing on Sheryl her own pair of size 10 Air Swoopes—the only shoe named after a female baller. "There's not a day that goes by that I don't pinch myself," she says. "Wow, there are little girls out there who have a choice between Air Jordans and Air Swoopes."

Sheryl was introduced to basketball by her older brothers, James and Earl, and played in her first league, the Little Dribblers, at age 7; these days, that league has a team called the Swoopsters. And starting July 21, Sheryl will be competing in front of a worldwide audience when the Women's Olympic Basketball competition begins in Atlanta. "I get emotional when I think about it," she says, "knowing I will be representing not only my teammates but my country." It wasn't so long ago that she had to leave the country to get a game.

After college, Swoopes played professionally in Italy because there were no women's teams in the U.S. But when the American Basketball League unveils an eight-city women's league in October, she'll get to play Stateside. Her speedy drives and effortless steals have a limited life span, though. "I don't see myself playing basketball when I'm 28," says Swoopes, who married her high school sweetheart, Eric Jackson, last June and says she wants six kids. "When I hang up my shoes," she says, "they're going to stay in the closet until my daughter's ready to wear them."

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Paradise Lost

Photographs by Phil Knott

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streets of the city
in
cyberspace
style

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by Patrick Cox;
black leather
short-sleeve
jacket by Gucci;
sunglasses
by Alain Mikli



White cotton
bomber suit
by J. J. & J. J.;
black Campack
by Matt Murphy;
sandals by
Patrick Cox



Yellow nylon-
and-polyurethane
dress by Junya
Watanabe Comme
des Garçons; gray
nylon Chinese
suit by Miu Miu
Wardrobe; sunglasses
by Diesel



(Clockwise from top left) Detroit blue jacket and raincoat by Joe Casely-Hayford; white pant by M&W Wardrobe; sandals by Lawler Duffy. Golden orange jacket and hot pant by M&W Wardrobe; patent maroon clogs by Patrick Cox; swimming cap by Speedo. Black jacket by JPG Paris; T-shirt by Jean Paul Gaultier. Cream raffia car coat by Marina Spadafora; turquoise lava print jean by Gucci; diamond sandals by Lawler Duffy



Black silk-and-organza belted trench coat, white viscose cardigan, and white cotton cady pant, all by Marina Spadafora; white shoes by Patrick Cox; white/silver/copper woven choker by Sukd-Stone





Gold-and-white
mesh body-print cat
suit by Jean Paul
Gaultier; white NASA
jacket by Daryl K at
KRT; white fur bag by
Gucci; white swim-
ming cap by Speedo.
Blue wool blazer
by M&W Wardrobe;
white neoprene mili-
tary coat by Jean
Paul Gaultier



Green tunic
dress by Joe
Casely-Hayford;
white top by Sub-
cuture; white
rayon pant and
white mules by
Patrick Cox; navy
blue bag by
Gucci; bracelet
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Circle 10 on Reader Service

Reginald Hudlin

It's a comedy that has as much to do with the O.J. trial as it does *Raging Bull*," says director Reginald Hudlin of his vicious new boxing satire, *The Great White Hype*, which stars Samuel L. Jackson as a Don King-like promoter, Damon Wayans as a spoiled heavyweight champ, and Peter Berg as his illy-Caucasian challenger. "It's about the machinations of playing the race card," Hudlin adds, "how people are played for patsies—and how we, as Americans, eat it up."

After two megahits, *House Party* (1990) and *Boomerang* (1992), *Hype* is, surprisingly, only Hudlin's third feature film. "I want to break into new territory, particularly as a black director—I always try to make but he movies that are a lot of fun, deal with real issues," says.

Toward that end, *Hype* is unsurprising about how boxers are exploited by their managers. "From high school age on," Hudlin continues, "the people who generate the dollars doing the work get into these paternalistic relationships where they leave the business to people who end up with far more money than they do."

So does he find similarities between the treatment of talent in boxing and, say, rap? "It's certainly far from limited to blacks—artists, entertainers, and athletes in this country are *pimped*. The current anti-intellectual attitude that's sweeping through black culture as a whole will only do more to make sure that situation doesn't change." And after a long, bleak moment, remembering he's promoting something too, Hudlin fills the silence with "But it's a laugh riot!" Robert Morales

word LOOK

'Naked Under Our Clothes: Unzipped, Uncut & Totally Unplugged'

Ed Lover and Doctor Dré, the lovable duo who host New York's popular Hot 97 morning show, begin their new book, *Naked Under Our Clothes: Unzipped, Uncut & Totally Unplugged* (Fireside) with this suggestion: "Take this book to the bathroom with you. Sit back, strain, relax between plops, and read." Now you know how *Naked* promises to entertain.

After being "enlightened" by Ed's simpleton theories on women and by the pair's pedestrian views on such tired subjects as



Doctor Dré, Ed Lover



the O.J. trial and Michael Jackson's skin color, relief finally comes in the form of behind-the-scenes tidbits on *YO! MTV Raps* (which they

used to host) and a scrapbook section filled with photos and lively narration. They recount tales of bum-rushing Arsenio to get a spot on his show, extra-large Dré scaling the fence around Mike Tyson's personal golf course and breaking it, and Dré jumping off a diving board with \$1 painted on his belly to announce *YO! No. 1* video. If Ed and Dré had stuck to these kinds of anecdotes and the fun insider dish they provide, maybe they could have elevated this book out of the toilet.

Laura Jamison

Comix: 'The System'

Like slow-motion footage of a .45 slug drifting through a gun barrel, Peter Kuper's *The System* (DC Comics) gives urban tragedy an almost graceful inevitability. Kuper is highly respected as a political cartoonist—he's done cover illustrations for *Time* and *Newsweek*—but he shines as the



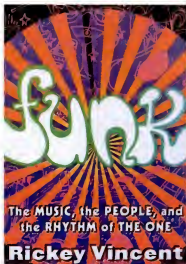
innovative creator of this three-issue comic book series. *The System* intertwines the lives of several instantly identifiable New York City archetypes (drunken subway motormen and drug-dealing beat cops) into a dreamily suspenseful tale of corruption and ambition. Somehow Kuper orchestrates this Robert Altman-esque black comedy without any dialogue, utilizing his signature color-stencil-art style to depict a class-conscious saga superior in depth and emotion to a year's stockpile of the *New York Post*.

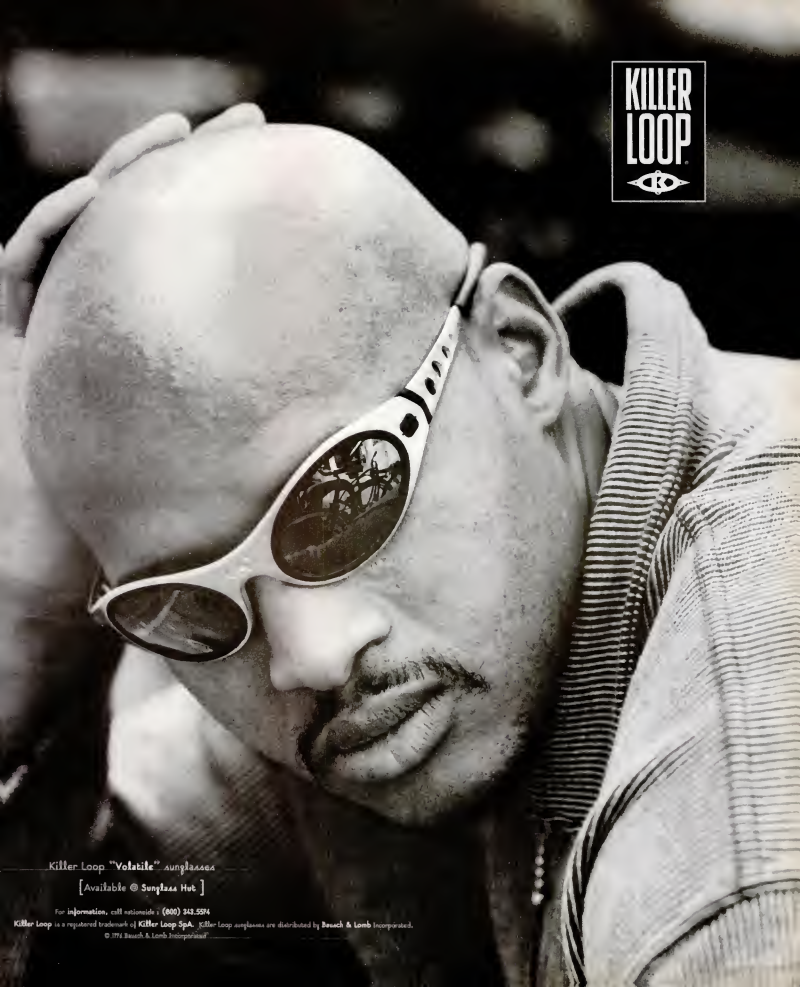
Robert Morales

'Funk: The Music, People, and the Rhythm of the One'

In *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One* (St. Martin's), grooveologist Rickey Vincent writes in a style knee-deep in both sociological insight and love for the music. At his best, Vincent achieves this by explaining how James Brown, Sly Stone, and the hip hop generation are all related to the Black Power movement. But the book's drawback is that it doesn't use enough interview material with funk's founders to embellish Vincent's critical theories and observations; a few words from the Ohio Players' Sugarfoot, say, on why the Buckeye State is so funky would have been invaluable. Yet, like James Brown sez, Vincent still manages to take the reader to da bridge. With *Funk*, a whole new school of discourse has been kicked open—and all ya gotta do is follow the bass line.

Michael A. Gonzales





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style LOOK

Gear: Urban Safari

This summer when it gets hotter than a microwave on crack, you may wanna throw on something khaki. That's right, khaki. The tan, usually cotton fabric long favored by preppies, hunters, and the army is getting a funky, modern revival in the dog days thanks to designers ranging from Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger to Cybertek and PNB Nation. Since it's a jungle out there, you may as well keep it cool.

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Kim, Cris

Pose: Double Chin

You've undoubtedly noticed them, leggy and intense, holding a TV in the Samsung electronics ads. But despite their mysterious, ethereal beauty, Cris and Kimberly Chin are really down-home, southern girls at heart. The identical twins were born and raised in Mobile, Ala.—the only children of a Chinese father and Scottish-Irish mother. "In Alabama, all we had were sandals and sundresses," Kim says. Cris,

in typical twin fashion, finishes the thought: "Yeah, when we came to New York, we were, like, 'Socks!'"

Kim and Cris got into modeling while attending the University of Miami. After one year overseas—where they appeared in *Vogue's* editions in Italy, Singapore, and Germany, and in French *Elle*—they moved to New York last year. While the popularity of the Samsung campaign has led to steady work in the States, including a Prescriptives cosmetics ad, the girls still face certain obstacles. "It's hard being a minority in this business," Kim says. "There's usually just one slot open for the Asian girl. And last season was awful because the look was blond, blond, blond." But seasons change, and the Chin sisters plan to weather the storm.

Andria M. Duncan

Ten (or So) Years Later: Cabbage Patch Kids

At some point in time we all hated vegetables. But back in the early '80s everybody fell in love with Xavier Roberts's Cabbage Patch Kids. These adorable and adoptable multicultural sweet peas gained worldwide attention from both children and adults: Sold-out stores all over the country were mobbed by customers who wanted their Cabbage Patch Kids—and wouldn't take no for an answer. Since then, the Kids' legacy has continued to rock on. In 1985 Topps came out with Garbage Pail Kids, a gross and humorous knockoff of Roberts's creation. In the late '80s, you could see B-boys and -girls doing an addictive little hip wiggle called the cabbage patch in clubs. Then came the '91 TV show *The Cabbage Patch Kids' First Christmas*, and a stop-motion animation special, *The New Kid*, in '95. Now Olympickids, the next generation of Cabbage Patchers—dressed in track, soccer, and gymnastics uniforms—are being harvested for the Atlanta Games. Once again, you'll be able to adopt your own leardy bundle of joy—once hopes this time without the guerrilla shopping tactics.

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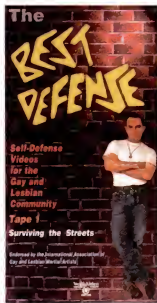


Film:
*The Man
by the
Shore*

The feral climate of Papa Doc Duvalier's reign is revealed like a child's nightmare in Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck's mesmerizing third feature, *The Man by the Shore* (*L'Homme sur les Quais*)—only here the scary details are real. Seen through the eyes of eight-year-old Sarah, the film explores a child's vague concept of dictatorship without being overtly political—her personal bogeyman is Janvier, a member of the Tonton Macoute, the “lifetime” president's vicious military police, who forces her parents into exile.

Peck's beautifully shot film (scheduled for a May 17 release in New York and Miami, with releases in other cities to follow) packs a powerful if didactic message about oppression and Haiti's long struggle for democratic rule. “A simple shopping trip to buy shoes can turn into a drama,” says Peck, 43, of everyday Haitian life. “This is how arbitrary violence and terror expresses itself. *The Man by the Shore* is about the daily horror that faces children throughout the world, whilst others play at killing on Nintendo machines.”

Cheo Tychimba



Video: 'The Best Defense: Surviving the Streets'

“I used to do it,” a well-known comedian once said in reference to the great American pastime known as gay bashing. “Every guy’s done it.” Well, every guy better start watching his back, thanks to *The Best Defense: Surviving the Streets* (Wolfe Video, 800-GET-WOLF), the first of a new three-part video series featuring eight of the world's top gay and lesbian martial arts instructors. The project was developed in response to the ever-increasing rates of antigay violence (statistics show that black and Latino gays and lesbians are more likely than their white counterparts to fall prey to “overkill” incidents involving an extraordinarily high level of gratuitous violence). *The Best Defense* demonstrates aggressive, practical self-defense techniques that can be used by the average person with no formal training in the martial arts. Not only are there interviews with victims of gay bashings, but for people into real-life drama, the video also incorporates actual Cops-like footage of a “queer patrol” wreckin’ sh!t. Chop, chop! Quohnos Mitchell

Shoot: MC Lyte and Jada Pinkett

Text and photos by
Lisa Levene

“Keep On Keepin’ On” is the title of MC Lyte’s new single—and it also describes what she’s doing at this shoot.

This is actually the second video for the song. The first was done in Atlanta with Xscape, a single from the soundtrack to *Sunset Park*; this one, directed by actress Jada Pinkett, is for Lyte’s upcoming album.

To capture that good-time feel, multiple overlaid images of MC Lyte were shot in Dragonfly, an L.A. nightclub. Lyte wears a variety of outfits to fit her various personalities. “Jada has me acting out her fantasies,” says Lyte. At one point, she convinces

Pinkett to make a cameo. “That was cute,” says Pinkett. “Now we have some comedy.”



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Equipment:
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Who says smaller isn't better? With the Panasonic SC-CH94M mini stereo system, you can now have all the boom-bangin' sound without all those components, cords, and speakers cluttering up your living room. Listing at \$499.95, the SC-CH94M is compact (giving you more shelf space), offers a 60-disc CD changer (getting rid of all those unattractive plastic cases), and has excellent sound quality (all you're really interested in, anyway). So just remember: Good things can come in small packages.

Emil Wilbekin

tech LOOK

CD-ROM: 'The Beat Experience'

If you suffer from postwar ennui, blow pop, and finger-pop to Negro jazzbos, *The Beat Experience* is the CD-ROM for you. Produced in conjunction with *Beat Culture and the New*

America: 1950-1965—a recent exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum (also touring to Minneapolis and San Francisco this year)—*The Beat Experience* emphasizes content over bells and whistles. Available in Mac and Windows versions, it'll hip you to Charlie Parker, Abstract Expressionism, experimental film, and those age-old favorites, sex 'n' drugs (including pinups that can be adjusted to suit either gay or straight tastes). This is one simulacrum that beats the hell out of anything you'll ever see at Disneyland.

Darius James



Accounts of the death of 16-bit video games have been greatly exaggerated. Combining satellite technology with fiber optics, the Sega Channel—the video game industry's first 24-hour interactive service—enables users with a 16-bit Sega Genesis system to plug in and choose from up to 50 games each month. Sports, education, flying and driving, and board games—such as Barkley: Shut Up and Jam!, Mortal Kombat 3, and The Adventures of Batman & Robin—are all included, as well as test-drives of soon-to-be-released games, game tips online, and even VJs who provide pick hits of the month. Currently available in more than 400 cities including Chicago, Houston, and Washington, D.C., the Sega Channel's main menu will soon feature original music by such artists as TLC, the Beastie Boys, and George Clinton. Welcome to the next level.

Gregg Bishop

For more information, contact your local cable operator, or call the Sega Channel at 800-896-SEGA.

Online: New York Online

"A lot of online communities are mostly men, or have very few people of color," says Omar Wasow, the 25-year-old president and founder of New York Online, the largest black-owned cyberservice in the country. "We pride ourselves on really feeling like New York." About 40 percent of the three-year-old, Brooklyn-based company's members are African-American, and 45 percent are women. Which means that, statistically, if you're chatting with one of NYO's 2,000 subscribers, there's a pretty good chance it's a black female.

NYO discussion-area topics include hip hop and such magazines as *Essence* and *VIBE*, and there are forums featuring personalities like Chuck D., Buju Banton, and Bootsy Collins. According to Wasow, one woman—comparing NYO to her experience with America Online—said it was like "going to the Motherland after being on a plantation." Harry Allen

NYO is available in the New York area by modem dial-up, but out-of-town users with a SLIP or PPP connection to the Internet can also gain access. For info, E-mail info@nyo.com, or call 718-596-6000.



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REVOLUTIONS

Hootie & the Blowfish

Fairweather Johnson

Atlantic

By Danyel Smith

It struck me, is all. Darius Rucker's voice, I mean. It's as beautiful as any I have ever heard. And when he sings about sad women, like he did in "Let Her Cry" from Hootie & the Blowfish's 1994 debut, *Cracked Rear View*, his voice goes almost impossibly round and full. It comes pouring out of his throat—raspy, rich—like his soul is so abundant with grief, he has to let some go. He spins around, like he's known to do, with his acoustic guitar—"Last night I tried to leave / Cried so hard / I could not believe / She was the same girl / I fell in love with / Long ago"—losing himself. Mark Bryan's electric guitar moans in the back, and Rucker sings like he just found out his feelings could get hurt, abandoning himself to the soaring release of blues: "I pray to God / You gotta help me fly away."

That the critically dismissed *Rear View* sold 13 million copies is not so astonishing. The four-man crew were then, and are now—with their new *Fairweather Johnson*—a creamier Pearl Jam, a younger Neil Diamond, a living Otis Redding, a baritone Al Green...all living up in the Eagles' Hotel California. A group of South Carolina-bred white guys who can drive it home when they have to, headed by a brother who stands there with a guitar, and plays it. Rucker looks less like someone from the Black Rock Coalition than like someone black who joined a white rock coalition, and started mentally hanging out

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with Dan Fogelberg and Bruce Springsteen. Which is kinda what he did. "Cause whatever contemporary rhythm and blues is (and mostly, it's Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds and his clones), on *Fairweather Johnson* it only shows up once, in the melody for "Let It Breathe." Tracks like "Silly Little Pop Song" are so Pearl Jam-y and Rucker sounds so much like Eddie Vedder—starting in the middle of words the way Vedder does—I can only hope it's what Rucker was consciously going for.

"Be the One" sounds like the Seattle band as well, but it's awesome. The song pounds along like a moving vehicle, like the Eagles' best shit, everything churning—nothing restrained or practiced about it. "I wanna die with you" is what Hootie are mostly singing, and there's a freedom in that admission and in the unfettered way they keep going, going, going that causes you to close your eyes and hang back your head. Maybe even get a little air guitar in yourself.

It's what Rucker does—sing, and like Steve Perry and Don Henley before him, sing huge, sad, melodious rock songs so well they make you happy. Unfortunately, though, many of the songs on *Fairweather* are less romantic than "Be the One" or the best of *Rear View*. And it's romance—in the dramatic, not always the love-affair sense—that, on songs like "Fool," fuels both Rucker's voice and the enthusiasm of the boys in the band.

"Saw you last night / You were sleeping in my mind," is how that one begins, and by the time Rucker sings "I shouldn't be feeling this pain / I better grow up now / Or go insane," his voice is resonant but weary, disappointment having pocked an instrument almost too heavy with feeling. "When I'm Lonely" is as depressing as its title, and Rucker carries morose lyrics like "Somebody called my name at 4 a.m. / It wasn't you / So I let her in" to a tormented, fade-away ending.

All the guys—Rucker, Bryan, Dean Felber, and Jim Sonefeld—write and arrange, and while there are skilled moments, there are wack ones as well.

DARIUS RUCKER SINGS HUGE, MELODIOUS, SAD ROCK SONGS SO WELL THEY MAKE YOU HAPPY. AND IT'S ROMANCE THAT FUELS HIS VOICE AND THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE BAND.

"She Crawls Away" is twangy—country-and-western tiredness. In "Honey-screw," the band rev up and almost drown Rucker out; "Lie to me / And I try to believe" is the best line in a tune memorable only for its sexy, sounds-like-a-Prince-song title. The melody for "Tootie" is too reminiscent of "Mr. Bojangles."

"Tucker's Town," though, is the song. Very Springsteen-y lyricwise and moodwise, it's best when Rucker runs all the words together, like they're on their way to where he wants to go. "Your father called my name / And then he sighed with great relief / That it wasn't me you were clinging to," he sings to a white girl whose dad is glad she's not holding on to a black man. The song builds like *Rear View*'s "Hold My Hand," and the payoff, Rucker singing like fire burning, is amazing.

And so people suspicious of Darius Rucker's location—onstage in front of three white guys, singing big, perceived-as-"white" songs—will be relieved to know that in this tune, Rucker sings of his alienation and his desire to be in a place where he's just him. In other words, he gets real fundamentally African-American. "I'm going down," he sings, "to Tucker's Town / Where I can laugh for free / And nobody stares at me."

I'm wondering if I love the song so much because it answers a silent question about Rucker. I am comforted to know he identifies with racial oppression, that he's not a magical African-American somehow above it all. I'm glad to know Darius Rucker can be as sad, and as mad, as I. It's an ugly little victory, but I'm happy I can claim him.

But I'm glad too to love "Tucker's Town" and the other good songs on *Fairweather Johnson*, because the band swell and ebb in all the right places, framing Rucker's voice with simple, intoxicating, authentic pop. I live for Hootie & the Blowfish because Darius Rucker's voice, so plainspoken and riffless, so ethereal, creates a space for people's sadnesses, a solid, earthy place, another place, for me to cry my blues—racial and otherwise. "I don't know what I can't see," he sings in "Tucker's Town" over and over. But I know he knows.

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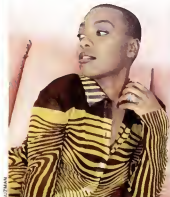
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Me'Shell NdegéOcello

Peace Beyond Passion *Maverick/Reprise*



On the Red Hot Organization's ingenious 1994 *Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool* compilation, Me'Shell Ndegé Ocello performed "Nocturnal Sunshine" with Herbie Hancock and thanked a friend in the notes for "helping me to understand that hatred is futile, sin is a figment of our imagination, and compassion is far greater than God." Such revelations can make for excellent lyrical discourse, as is demonstrated on the thoughtful *Peace Beyond Passion*.

NdegéOcello is still Every Woman, good for tellin' you exactly what's on her mind—just like she did on her more playful 1993 debut, *Plantation Lullabies*, where she let us into her bold sexuality and her outrage. On *Peace*, NdegéOcello is even more open with her personal/sexual struggles, her God (she fantasizes, in a sultry song named after the saint, about marrying a version of Mary Magdalene), and her politics. And she doesn't mind telling the world, even as she's still figuring it all out.

But *Peace* (produced by Lullabies' David Gamson) is rather like an Old Testament script—flipped. Or a study in Eastern philosophy. NdegéOcello begs to be freed into a world of "transcendent reality" on "God Shiva," which incorporates the breakdown from Stevie Wonder's 1970 "Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours," as well as an amazing guitar solo courtesy of David Slezysinski.

On "Leviticus: Faggot," she challenges the book's ancient code of religious laws by applying them to homosexuality's contemporary truths—no surprise, they come up short. A Cimmerian string arrangement combined with Queen-like harmonies, Wah-Wah Watson guitar riffs, and LaBelle-like shouts make "Leviticus" one of *Peace*'s most extravagant tracks. It will make your backbone slip.

As will NdegéOcello's gender-bending cover of Bill Withers's 1972 "Who Is He and What Is He to You," which features Billy Preston on organ and a near-perfect string arrangement courtesy of Paul Riser. It's here that NdegéOcello truly sings (she purrured through most of *Plantation*). And while Me'Shell's voice is not exceptional, she works what she's got, especially on the aggressively sexy "A Tear and a Smile," where her throaty alto intimately intertwines with Preston's organ. *Peace Beyond Passion* is Me'Shell NdegéOcello's rhythmic struggle for equanimity. And her progress is wonder/full.

Karen R. Good

'Original Gangstas'

Soundtrack to the Motion Picture
Various Artists *Noo Trybe/Virgin*

These days, soundtracks aren't compiled to enhance films as much as they're put together to promote them. And to help along this thug flick, some of hip hop's illest figures have dropped some of homicide-type shit. Too bad my eyes glazed over at the 1,674th studio killing—and that most of the beats and rhymes on *Original Gangstas* are DOA as well.

There are a few survivors: Junior M.A.F.I.A.'s "White Chalk Part II," Spice 1's "Slugs," and RSO Featuring Mobb Deep's "Wars On." The most intriguing cut, though, is "How Does It Feel," from hip hop's real original gangsta, Ice-T. He seems to understand that there's more to the 'hood than yellow tape. And that nihilism is easier to stomach when it adheres to Grandma's old maxim: If you're not going to be intelligent, at least be interesting.

Darrell M. McNeill



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music

THE REAL MUSIC

By Greg Tate

Wynton Marsalis was recently quoted as saying that he's not down with the direction JOHN COLTRANE's music took before he died, and he accused 'Trane's later work of scaring away audiences. With these words, Marsalis aligned himself with the crusty jazz critics from back in the day who described late-period 'Trane as "antijazz" and "hate music."

Hearing such statements tossed off always makes me wonder what 'Trane recordings these cats are listening to. Yes, it's music of roaring intensity, and by no stretch of the imagination is it easy listening. But it is also music full of beauty and questing, lust for life, romance, and transcendence. Now that the revived Impulse! label has released two albums from that final phase of 'Trane's career, you can dive on in and make your own assessment.

Sun Ship and *Stellar Regions* hark back to 1965 and 1967, with the latter being unreleased material Alice Coltrane, the master saxophonist's piano- and harp-playing wife, has just made available from her private stock of tapes. *Sun Ship* demonstrates the ready-for-next rapport the classic Coltrane quartet of pianist McCoy Tyner, drummer Elvin Jones, and bassist Jimmy Garrison achieved. Right before 'Trane begins the searing ballad "Dearly Beloved," you can hear him tell Jones to "try and keep a thing going throughout." The suggestion might seem superfluous given the way Jones always keeps a few things going when he plays, but the barrage of sound this group brought forth demands specific terms to get the point across— words like *monsoon*, *tsunami*, *hurricane*, and *tornado* only roughly approximate the sort of natural energies you feel blowing out of your speakers when you listen to this divine band.

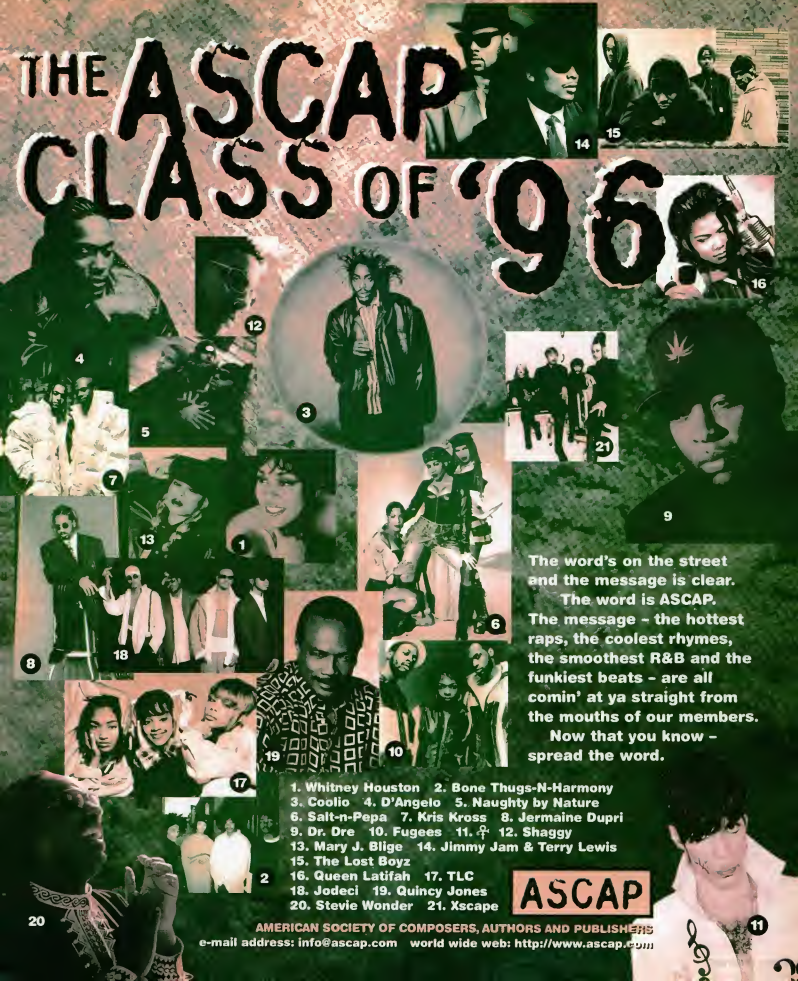
What makes it more than a joyous noise is the palpable sense of concoction, commitment, and mutual awareness these men had, even when the music was clearly heading for destinations unknown. Listen especially to "Ascend," wherein a long solo by Jimmy Garrison evolves into a swinging intergalactic stomp. Here you'll find 'Trane blowing as hard as any tenor legend is supposed to, but breaking off phrases and screams far beyond the capabilities of mortal men. If there were a way to harness this group's power surges for home appliances, utility companies would be a thing of the past.

Stellar Regions is some of the last music 'Trane would record before his death on July 17, 1967, and he was in the company of his last band: Alice Coltrane, drummer Rashied Ali, and mainstay Garrison. Though a less than thunderous group, they were in complete sympathy with 'Trane's angular approach to melody and tidal flux of emotions. In his final months of life, John Coltrane embodied through his horn a knowledge of self and the universe so complete that to some of us he still seems nearly godlike. Hate music? I don't think so.



John Coltrane, 1962

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13. Mary J. Blige 14. Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis
15. The Lost Boys
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The Isley Brothers

Mission to Please T-Neck/Island



Ernie, Ronald, Marvin

Angela Winbush, Ronald Isley's wife. And the collaborations work: *Mission to Please* completely captures, in mood and sound, the essence of contemporary urban romance. Though I could do without "Floatin' on Your Love"—a mushy Angela-Ronald duet—the remainder of the album is filled with lovely, lusty life tunes.

Babyface, in particular, seems to be drifting on Quiet Storm grooves and *Waiting to Exhale* blues. His superb "Tears" is an enchanting story of a love destined to last forever. And Ronald almost brings water to my eyes when he sings, "I can't hold back these tears / Let me cry.... If I hold back my tears / I'll just die."

Fans of the funk might be mad that there are no boogie tunes on *Mission to Please*. But with beautiful songs like R. Kelly's "Can I Have a Kiss (For Old Times' Sake)" and the Winbush-produced "Let's Get Intimate," the Isleys make sure we can all still dance the horizontal boogie.

Michael A. Gonzales

Young Zee

Musical Meltdown Perspective

At times, Young Zee's impassioned debut, *Musical Meltdown*, evokes Redman, Kool Keith, and even Son Doobie. But mostly, Zee sounds like an average Joe who's opposed to today's funk-bastardizing, murder-mouthing, chart-topping tactics. Zee, who got props for his spot on the Fugees' recent, otherwise pedestrian "Cowboys," here sternly tells gun-happy posers, "Enough of your 'fairy' tales / Out you go!"

His insults echo the sentiments of many fans—and his minimalist tracks work. When not performing tongue-in-cheek choruses ("Problems") or boasting about weed ("Toxic Waste"), Zee proves that compact beats and ingenious similes can still move a crowd.

Ronin Ro



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Questions

1. Isn't **Coolio** the reincarnation of MC Hammer? 2. Why doesn't LeShaun appear in the video for **L.L. Cool J's** "Doin It"? 3. And why is L.L. giggling (and presumably licking his lips) after every track on *Mr. Smith*—does he know something we don't? 4. We know opportunities are few and far between, but isn't the sublime **Dave Chappelle** playing himself big-time on ABC's extra-tired *Buddies*? 5. Exactly when (and why?) are **surveillance cameras** supposed to make us feel safe? 6. What is it about a new **Hugo Boss** suit that just *works*? 7. Is it us, or has **Urban Outfitters** finally beaten out Barnes & Noble bookstores as the hot pickup spot? 8. Speaking of all things Urban,

COURTESY OF ISLAND RECORDS



Joe

ones who have

a problem with the fact that **Urban Decay** has two lipstick colors called Bruise and Asphyxia?

9. Doesn't **2Pac's** voice on *All Eyez on Me* often sound exactly like E-40's? 10. Seriously—the show can be corny, but isn't *Family Matters'* **Jaleel "Urkel" White** the most underrated slapstick comedian in the world? 11. Why are folks so open on that sheer shirt **Tony Rich** sports in his chic video for "Nobody Knows"? 12. Isn't it a little too soon for **Marky Mark** nostalgia? 13. Which **wedded R&B diva** dyed her hair black and had to go back to platinum blond 'cause black made her look too pale? 14. And speaking of soul singers, hasn't **Mary J. Blige** been looking fly lately? 15. Could it be because her "**Not Gon' Cry**" is the new female national anthem? 16. Or is **Joe** smiling because his "All the Things Your Man Won't Do" is about to bump "Not Gon' Cry" as the song to break up to? 17. Who's that dancing with joy now that **Halle Berry** is the new Revlon spokesmodel? (Not Dave Justice or Veronica Webb!) 18. And speaking of folks who could model—when did **Large Professor** get so *fine*? 19. If it's not true (and Bad Boy denies it), why do we keep hearing that the **Notorious B.I.G.** is secretly recording and plans to release a new album—maybe called *Life After Death*—in time for Halloween? 20. And sorry, but could you die laughing while watching Fox's *The Tick*, or what?

COURTESY OF FOX



DAVE E

MaBe

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That cut with the funky-ass bass line
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Up (It's Gonna Be You)"
550 Music</p> <p>219 Brian Green
"You Send Me"
Yab Yum Records/
550 Music</p> <p>220 Monifah
"You"
Uptown/Universal Records</p> <p>221 MC Ren
"Mad Scientist"
Ruthless Records</p> | <p>222 Eazy-E
"Sippin On A 40"
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"Get Right"
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"All I See"
Kedar Entertainment/
Universal Records</p> <p>225 Groove Collective
"Lift Off"
Impulse/Giant Step</p> <p>226 Teena Marie
"Ooo La La La" from The
Soul Of Seduction Box Set
Legacy Recordings/
Sony Music</p> |
|--|---|

April Poll Results: Sa Deuce's "Don't Waste My Time" and DeVante's "Gin & Juice" should be blowin' up the airwaves because they both received 70% of votes to Jam their tracks...Chino XL's debut single should also be getting some airtime. "No Complex" was Jammed by 63% of callers...Another debut will be pumping in the cars. 62% of y'all Jammed the Cella Dwellas' "Perfect Match"...It was close for the diva Diana Ross, as a matter of fact too close. Her single "Voice of the Heart" got by with only 52% of votes to Jam...Apparently, Royal C's "Real G's" wasn't real enough. His track was Slammed by 71% of callers.

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NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

By The Blackspot



Blind Mice

I've been digging deep in my bottomless bin of unsigned artists' tapes, and Blind Mice surface as the new champions. Group members Shadow and Da 5'6" bring the drama straight from Brooklyn with a heartfelt, rags-to-riches tale called "Paper Capers." With a pinch of ruggedness and a twist of Native Tongue-style consciousness, Blind Mice drop clever lyrics while the hypnotizing beats from producer Shawn J. Period (Mad Skills, Akinyele, Artifacts) lull you into their zone. As hip hop goes

through its inevitable sonic and lyrical evolution, let's see how Blind Mice go down in history. For more information, call Metaphysical Management at 718-756-5431.

If you're still thinking that a rhyme cipher is nothing but a group of MCs trading flows, Cipa (Sojourn Productions, 302-655-6035) will put an end to that misconception. Vocally burn-rushing the set from Wilmington, Del., Flex and Solomon pose a threat to all competition with their old-school-influenced single "Rock, Rock On." This rhythmic concoction has a nod-your-head-while-you-lace-up-your-Pumas type of flow that doubles with punchy kick drums and wind-cutting snares.

Lyrics like "I'm havin' flashbacks through my stress-filled raps / visualize and verbalize / Extracting ghetto facts" will take you back to the days when MCs rhymed instead of outlining ways to murder your relatives. Even though the life-is-hard-on-the-streets rap sermon has been heard again and again, Cipa speak confidently about being the exception to the bleak young-black-male statistics.

Ladies, is smoke shooting out of your ears because you remind R. Kelly of his jeep? Are you teed off at those G-string-flauntin', booty-shakin' bass records that only big-up the fellas? If so, have no fear because Bahm Bahm is here to save the day. A resident of Tallahassee, Fla. and a physical therapy major at Florida A&M University (you go, girl!), Bahm rocked the Sunshine State earlier this spring with "Let's Just Ride"—her sexy response to Kelly's "You Remind Me of Something." You can expect Bahm Bahm's debut, also called Let's Just Ride, right about now. Or check for her on DJ Ace's South Coast Rap compilation, DJ Nasty Nook's Sex, and South Side Pride's Hi De Ho. Call Street Street Music at 407-362-5228 for further details.

Who would be one of the flyest groups coming out of Oakland? The Whoridas, that's who! Representing the infamous Hood Junction (the loose collective that spawned freestyle genius Saafir), the Whoridas (pronounced "who-rye-das") kick that of West Coast funk minus the musical or lyrical influence of Snoop Doggy Dogg or Tha Dogg Pound—thank goodness!

The duo first appeared in the fall of 1995, on Hobo's self-released "Whoriden," and gained an instant regional following. The Whoridas now seek to slash suckers from coast to coast with jagged rhyme flows like "You never got started to how you prophesizin' game / The name on the tape be monopolizing mainstream, underground / Shake the Park Place down with bass / Unmatched by any tin-faced / Producer with a weak mix." But the Whoridas' most attractive attribute is their hungry voices—King Sann and Mr. Taylor sound determined to get theirs. In fact, as VIBE went to press, Hobo Records inked a distribution deal with major label Delicious Vinyl. Check this summer for the Whoridas' single "Shot Callin' & Big Ballin'" and a forthcoming, yet-to-be-named album. Call 510-273-2442 for more information.

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Sorry, it seems the lawyers won't let me name names.

But you know who I'm talking about. And you know it's all a bunch of hooley.

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Can I say ~~unadorned~~ Guess not.

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Prince

Music from the Motion
Picture 'Girl 6'
Warner Bros.



The soundtrack for *Girl 6*, Spike Lee's paean to the phone sex industry, could easily be mistaken for another Prince greatest hits set. With the exception of three new tunes, the album collects some of the royal one's most romantic—and kinky—old songs. Compiled under this sensual theme, his earlier jams seem to have new bite.

The butt-smacking drum-machine beats of 1984's "Erotic City," featuring his old band, the Revolution, sound as good as they ever did. What you feel in your legs when Prince and Sheila E. croon in unison, "You're a sinner / I don't care / I just want your creamy thighs," is the urge to freak someone on a dance floor.

The New Power Generation help Prince with the title track. Its lazy, funky groove contains snippets of ringing phones, 1987's "Housequake," and 1985's "Raspberry Beret," and features *Girl 6* star Theresa Randle speaking erotically. The album's only disappointment is the new ballad "Don't Talk to Strangers," which has a comball factor almost as high as 1991's "Diamonds and Pearls." (All thanks 2 God, "D and P" is not included here.)

Even if you've never cared about the former Artist Formerly Known As Prince, the soundtrack for *Girl 6* is a perfect dance-and-slow-jam introduction to his esteemed, sexy body of work.

Omarionne Idowu

Just the Facts THE JACKSON FAMILY

While there have been many successful musical families, none can compare to Gary, Ind.'s Jacksons. In the 1970s they shared the spotlight with the Osmonds—but while Donny and Marie have been available for birthdays and bar mitzvahs for over a decade, the Jacksons are still winning awards and setting the sales pace for the music industry.

As solo artists, and in various groupings, the Jacksons have released more than 60 albums and scored more than 50 Top 10 hits. The Marleys lead reggae, the Winanses own gospel, the Marsalisese rule jazz—but Rebbie, Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, La Toya, Marion, Michael, Randy, Janet, and ST (T, Taj, and Taryll) got them all in check.

Compiled by OJ Lima

The Jackson 5/The Jacksons

- Recorded 18 albums, 1970–1999

- Top 20 pop singles: 23

Rebbie

- Date of birth: May 29, 1950

- Recorded three solo albums: *Centipede* (1984), *Reaction* (1988), and *RU Tuff Enough* (1988)

- Biggest hit: "Centipede" (1984)—No. 24 pop

Jackie

- Date of birth: May 4, 1951

- Recorded two solo albums: *Jackie Jackson* (1973) and *Be the One* (1989)

- Claim to shame: His real name is Sigmond Escio Jackson.

Tito

- Date of birth: October 15, 1953

- Claim to fame: His singing sons, T.J., Taj, and Taryll—also known as 3T

Jermaine

- Date of birth: December 11, 1954

- Recorded 13 solo albums, 1972–1991

- Top 20 pop singles: 6

- Best-selling album: *Jermaine Jackson* (1984)—gold

- Biggest hit: "Let's Get Serious" (1980)—No. 9 pop

La Toya

- Date of birth: May 29, 1956

- Recorded four solo albums, 1980–1988

- Claim to shame: Philadelphiens threw

bottles at her during her 1996 Live Exotic Club tour.

Marlon

- Date of birth: March 12, 1957

- Recorded one solo album: *Baby Tonight* (1987)

- Biggest hit: "Don't Go" (1987)

Michael

- Date of birth: August 29, 1958

- Recorded 11 solo albums, 1972–1995

- No. 1 pop singles: 12

- Biggest accomplishment: *Thriller* (1982)—24 times platinum

Randy

- Date of birth: October 29, 1961

- Recorded two solo albums: *Randy & the Gypsies* (1989) and *Bed of Nails* (1991)

- Claim to fame: None

Janet

- Date of birth: May 16, 1966

- Recorded five solo albums, 1982–1993

- No. 1 pop singles: 7

- Biggest accomplishment: *Janet* (1983)—6 times platinum

3T

- Dates of birth: August 4, 1973 (Taj); August 8, 1975 (Taryll); July 16, 1978 (T.J.)

- Recorded one album: *Brotherhood* (1995)

- Top 20 pop singles: 1, "Anything," 1995

Sources: Billboard, R&A

Heather B.

Takin' Mine EMI

If you were a faithful viewer of the first season of MTV's *The Real World* in 1992, then you already know that Heather B. takes shit from nobody. With her debut release, *Takin' Mine*, Heather is rhyming strictly for those in the streets. And while her desire to be accepted as just-one-of-the-boys is apparent on every single track—talk of smokin' much weed and downin' 'nuff alcohol runs rampant—there's no reason to be mad at this sista.

If anything (and most importantly), Heather's love of music is what stands out. On the tight, Kenny Parker-produced head nodder "Mad Bent," she lays down her law: "Watch me / Heather B. / No gimmicks, no tricks / No niggas in the background / Writin' my shit." Heather's personal fire heats up her lyrics, and proves that she lives and breathes real hip hop.

Shan! Saxon



Photo: David Laundy



Ever wonder how Ice-T, always polite in interviews, really feels about snot-nosed Cali rappers releasing wack-ass in-the-hood albums? If so, peep *Return of the Real* for his honest answer. Ice, who has one of hip hop's longest résumés (MC, film star, author, lecturer, rock star), spends much of his sixth rap album giving braid-wearing posers the bozack.

One of the main originators of L.A. gangsta-isms (remember 1987's "6 'N the Mornin' '77), Ice-T expresses the idea that thug rap is on its last legs in his every word. These days his

lyrics struggle with apathy and fatalism, and strive to educate the younger listener, something he's been doing on every album since 1987's *Rhyme Pays*. *Return* proves that Ice is open-minded, busy with pen and pad, and devoted to the preservation of vividly complex, pre-N.W.A hip hop.

Instead of tales of cars, guns, booze, and weed, he presents a striking vision of his environment with a knack for detail on par with Martin Scorsese or Nas. Ice's delivery is confident, his choice of subjects refreshing and engaging. He questions why success is anathema to any "real" hip hopper ("Make the Loot Loop"), trashes envious 'hood rats alongside talented newcomer Big Rich ("They Want Me Back in"), and warns the next generation, in "Rap Games Hijacked," "The effin' record label don't love you, pal / They didn't love you on the street and don't love you now."

And Ice-T eschews half-baked keyboards, awkward bass, and tired pop loops. Instead, his rhymes are set to everything from ballad-type melodies ("Inside of a Gangsta") to hip-roaring breakbeats ("Rap Games Hijacked") and monstrous Wu-Tang-style piano tracks ("Cramp Your Style"). Entertaining from start to finish, Ice-T's *Return of the Real* sets sociology to street beats and shows "gangstas" that a real G never stops thinking—or doing.

Ronin Ro



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BOOMSHOTS

By Rob Kenner

The DJ named Dillinger broke it down best: "A knife, a fork, a bottle, and a cork / That's the way we spell New York." *Man haff eat food.* Translation: Let's go get this money. And that's exactly what New York's raggamuffin royalty hopes to do this summer. Dancehall's biggest chart-busters—Snow's "Informer," Ini Kamoze's "Hot Stepper," and Shaggy's Grammy-winning "Boombastic"—were all crafted (by MC Shan, Salaam Remi, and Sting International, respectively) in the city with no pity. And to judge by the bumper crop of tunes now ripening for harvest, we haven't heard the last of N.Y.C.'s reggae-hop hybrids. Watch Wild Apache, Spengy, and Kickass, as well as these "big three" labels:

Big Yard: Brooklyn's own Mr. Boombastic keeps ringing out worldwide, but he's still rolling with the same clique from Flatbush—crucial singer Rayvon, production master Sting International, and ragga-rough DJ Red Fox (whose latest single, "Wicked Alfred," is musical murder). Former Super Cat associate Robert Livingston rounds out the Big Yard hit squad.

Tan Yab: Back in 1975, Philip Smart left Jamaica with an advanced doctorate in dub (having graduated from the King Tubby Institute) to set up shop in Strong Island. There he established HC&F studios, a Stateside stronghold where international artists from Shaggy to Super Cat to Mikey Spice do damage. Also be on the lookout for sizzling selections on their new Digital Eclipse imprint.

Massive B: As you read this, hardworking Bobby Konders is either rocking the airwaves or deep in the studio grinding out bad-bwoy choons for his Massive B label. (If you're playing catch-up, check the 1996 compilation CD *Reggae Meets Hip Hop*). Besides boosting up his own stable of New York artists, Massive B now traffics in top Jamaican talent. When dancehall OG Cutty Ranks wanted to spark his long-anticipated comeback album (now out on Priority Records), he made the trip to Konders's Brooklyn studio. The Cutter emerged with a single that screamed, "Ready fe return." And he was.

New York's reggae-hop lineage stretches from the Masters of Ceremoney through BDP and 1987's epochal "The Bridge Is Over." And during those same early '80s, transplanted Yardies like Shinehead, Shelly Thunder, Mikey "Mack Daddy" Jarrett, Reverend Baddo, Sluggsy Ranks, BoBo General, Screchy Dan, and K.C. Jockey forged big reputations.

Another veteran from that era, a tall, droopy-eyed Jamaican expatriate known as Sleepy Wonder, is poised to strike again. He cut his teeth in Kingston alongside future phenoms Beenie Man and Little Kirk, but in '84 he was unleashed on the unsuspecting borough of Brooklyn. After trading lyrical blows with every artist in the vicinity, Sleepy found one challenge remaining: He'd never battled Shinehead. "I went all the way to the Bronx to bust that ass," he recalls, "but Shinehead always seemed to be away on tour." Their "healthy musical beef" escalated to the inevitable confrontation back in 1988. Surprise! They ended up as good friends and sparring partners.

While Sleepy scored hits like 1988's "Fade Away," Shinehead gave him even greater exposure by featuring him on his 1994 *Troddin'*. Old-school DJ/producer Chuck Chillout took in one of their turbocharged performances and offered Sleepy a deal the next day. His first single on the Phat Wax label, "Rookie," was inspired by wet-behind-the-ears DJs "who should be in the house drinking milk and cookie." As he prepares to tour such far-flung towns as Salt Lake City (and other places he can't get carried goat), Sleepy muses on the road that got him here: "Competition is fine, but as long as we artists fight one another, there can be no progress. Remember, it's not a one-man thing."



Sleepy Wonder

'The New Groove: The Blue Note Remix Project—Vol.1'

Various Artists *Blue Note*



We've all fantasized about time travel and imagined the pleasure of surfacing, Zelig-like, in a moment long since gone. Through the wonder of fin de siècle technology, *The New Groove* gives 10 top-shelf hip hop production teams the opportunity to inhabit a historical text of their choosing.

While sampling melodies has been a part of hip hop since Kool Herc's first block party, this project goes much deeper. Each contemporary artist has been given creative license with

the actual master tapes from the incredibly rich archives of Blue Note Records (an honor previously granted to US3 for their 1993 *Hand on the Torch*), allowing them to recontextualize rhythms in a manner that makes the past and the present (almost) one.

But as with most things experimental, some aspects of this process work and some make you wish folks had left well enough alone. Guru's rendition of Gene Harris's "Listen Here" stands out, melding greasy keyboard funk and laid-back lyricism into a seamless intergenerational meditation. The Ummah (Q-Tip, Ali-Shaheed Muhammad, and newcomer Jay Dee) take Grant Green's breezy "Down Here on the Ground" and add a truly majestic vocal performance from Dianne Reeves—it's aural ambrosia. Easy Mo Bee works similar wonders with Horace Silver's propulsive big band track "The Sophisticated Hippie." Bobby Hutcherson's marimba-laced "Montara" is a shimmering instrumental, reworked courtesy of the Roots.

Unfortunately, several other tracks, like Large Professor's revamp of the Cannonball Adderley Quintet's "Hummin'," sound tentative, as if the Prof couldn't quite figure out how much he wanted to alter musical history. Ultimately, *The New Groove* is a bit too uneven to emerge as the cream of the many hip hop jazz albums (like Guru's 1993 *Jazzmatazz Vol. 1*) that have hit the market over the past several years—but it's a back-to-the future-type journey that's well worth the trip.

Chris H. Smith

Rage Against the Machine

Evil Empire *Epic*

When Rage Against the Machine released their eponymous debut in 1992, few understood their fusion of hip hop's revolutionary chic and east-Iron rock riffs. Now Rage's sophomore effort, *Evil Empire*, solidifies their manifesto. There's no satanic schlock or yapping about "spring cleans for the



May queen" in Rage's jagged, hip-hop-cadenced vocabulary—though they might steal a few moves from Led Zeppelin's playbook (but then, who doesn't?). The riffs on "People of the Sun," "Bulls on Parade," and "Without a Face" rip and twist like forces of nature. And the siren howls and DJ-type scratches guitarist Tom Morello grinds on his ax would make the Bomb Squad jealous.

Joseph V. Tirella

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Summer Jams

Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, big releases fall through the cracks. But we couldn't let summer begin without an opinionated guide to the good, the bad, and the absolute butta

Beats Worth Jackin'

Last summer in New York City, Rakwon's melodramatic strains on *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx...* ruled the city. 'Kwon's Wu-brava **GENIUS** dropped the exceptional *Liquid Swords* (Geffen) last fall, and while it's definitely summer-pumpable, it's a humorless song cycle more suited to cold weather. The RZA's production, punctuated by ultrachaotic kung fu flick excerpts, raises tracks like "4th Chamber" and "Investigative Reports" to Shao Lin Hall of Fame status. The Genius earns his nom de plume by making lines like "I'm not caught up in politics / I'm no black activist / On a so-called scholar's dick" sound deeper than Captain Nemo.

Deep thoughts are also **GOODIE MOB's** forte. On their debut, *Soul Food* (LaFace), the Atlanta-based quartet come off like a hip hop update of '70s funk legends

War. The crew are socially aware and proudly regional—if susceptible to preachiness. While *Soul Food's* tastiest ingredients are "Cell Therapy" and "Thought Process," the latter's anguished, conspiracy-conscious content and refined harmonies never let you forget that the world is a ghetto.

But as usual, the **GETO BOYS** take things a step further. An actual remake of War's classic 1972 "The World Is a Ghetto" is the leading theme from *The Resurrection* (Rap-A-Lot). The album—which reunites the classic lineup of Scarface, Willie D, and Bushwick Bill after a five-year hiatus—will be a big serving of omeriness. Despite some hokey moments ("Geto Boys and Girls"), transcendent anthems like the self-explanatory "I Just Wanna Die" and the fist-pumping "Still" are enough to convince any innocent bystanders that the Geto Boys' chemistry, bravado, and magic are back.

On the other hand, fellow Houston headcase **GANKSTA NIP** would have you believe that (a) Illuminati-driven horrorcore is a viable genre, and (b) he's a *Psychotic Genius* (Noo Trybe/Rap-A-Lot). While Nip can alternate fiery flows on a dime, his soggy beats keep me skeptical.

The skepticism continues with **FLADOGG FOWL's** *Dogg Food* (Death Row).

The album fails to satisfy appetites made hearty by the brouhaha that preceded its release. Standouts like "New York, New York" and "Do What I Feel" can't disguise the fact that *Dogg Food* is little more than just a semisolid collection of post-Dre funk drops.

At least labelmate **2PAC** deserves credit for avoiding the generic. Mr. Controversy goes *z* tracks deep on *All Eyes on Me*, with a roster of guests—Dr. Dre, Snoopy Doggy Dogg, George Clinton, Roger Troutman, Method Man, and Redman, among others—that rivals the cast of *The Towering Inferno* for star power. So why does it all go up in flames? Sounding slapped together,

the album degenerates from disposable pleasures like "All Bout U" and "Got My Mind Made Up" to a mish-mash of boring smut ("What's Ya Phone #"), female baiting ("Wonda Why They Call U Bitch"), and routine gangsta life endorsements ("Thug Passion")—all submerged in a sea of played-out samples. Only extra patient fans will still be bumping this album when Pac *finally* speaks on the events of his recent past. *All Eyes on Me* is not the crime Pac has actually been convicted of, but it's pretty bad. Pass me the cellular, I'm calling the hip hop cops.

But amazingly, not on **KRIS KROSS**—the youthful duo pull off a convincing impersonation of G-affed adults on their third album, *Young, Rich & Dangerous* (Ruffhouse/Columbia). Too bad Jermaine Dupri's ultra-smooth production and guests like Da Brat end up stealing the show from the backward-pant-wearing crew on winners like "Live and Die for Hip Hop."

Def Squad linchpin **ERICK SERMON's** *Double or Nothing* (DefJam) also makes room for a roster of show-stealing guests (Redman, Keith Murdin, Hurricane G, Roz), yet moves beyond mere funk idiosyncrasies for a handful of dope creations ("Freak Out," "Tell 'Em," "Move On") in the "How High" mode.

FUNKMASTER FLEX's *The Mix Tape Volume 1: 60 Minutes of Funk* (Loud) brings the street-tested phenomenon of the mix tape to a CD player near you. While novices will shake their asses to the party classics, devoted heads may eschew the collection for more subterranean pastures.

Something most everyone can agree upon is *The Score* (Ruffhouse/Columbia), the sophomore effort from the **FUGEES**. It's already acknowledged as the album to beat in '96. While radio rotates "Fu-Gee-La" and "Killing Me Softly" into submission, the disc also addresses social ills ("The Mask," "Cowboys") and personal struggles ("Zeal-ous," "The Score," "Manifest") with equally exhilarating results. Personal music delivered with conviction and passion, *The Score* should provide the ideal score for many lives this summer. No cookout will be complete without it.

Chairman Mao

Genius

Erick Sermon

Songs Worth Singing

Some albums

hang around for more

than one season, and *WAITING TO EXHALE*—a soul soundtrack for the ages—definitely falls into that category. Writer/producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds's emotional collection ignores generational differences and triumphs with richly detailed songs, deceptively simple arrangements, and a mighty congress of women who can really sing.

In addition to promising newcomers like Sonja Marie, you get a feisty tune from Brandy and a(nother) cool one from TLC; you get more natural, less modulated vocals from Faith Evans and Mary J. Blige; you get a rapt Aretha Franklin and Chaka Khan. Plus an ecstatic

Patti LaBelle, elegantly throaty Toni Braxton—and, oh yeah, somebody named Whitney Houston. This is summertime—anytime—music.

And that's because Babyface pays attention to even the smallest details:



La Bouche

Like how he places Chanté Moore's keen tones in most of the songs' back-grounds, establishing a sonic constant on an album about how romance so often isn't.

DEBORAH COX probably missed a spot on *Exhale* by a year or so. She's a rookie whose deft singing radiates deep intelligence and a veteran's heart. On her eponymous debut (Arista), tracks like "Sentimental," "My Radio," and a porcelain cover of the S.O.S. Band's "Just Be Good to Me" (all produced by Dallas Austin) soar almost as high as the stuff on *Exhale*.

QUINCY JONES's *Q's Jook Joint* (Qwest/Warner Bros.) looses a cast of (what seems like) hundreds on various classics from his musical universe, covering a span of gorgeously resculpted time from the 1940s through the 1990s. After seven big-band minutes of "Cool Joe, Mean Joe (Killer Joe)," wherein a warm brass section converses with ace keyboardist Greg Phillinganes, Jones's newest protégée, Tamia, seems to magically appear. The music starts slowly rocking (like a chair, not like Led Zeppelin), and in no time she's sung the giant swoop of "You Put a Move on My Heart." Her voice is something you can



almost touch.

Other standouts include, once again, teen sensation Brandy, who realizes the dreams of '80s pop heads with her very own version of Michael Jackson's 1979 "Rock With You." And R. Kelly—with the help of the great Gap Band singer Charlie Wilson—contemplates Naomi Campbell in the exquisite "Heaven's Girl." Then, when Wilson and Brandy refunk Jones and Ashford and Simpson's 1978 "Stuff Like That," you realize you could stay in this jook joint for a while.

Another jazzy, ambitious record where string arrangers (like Clare Fischer), percussionists (Sheila E., Paulinho Da Costa), and guest guitarists (like the still nimble Ray Parker Jr.) make dazzling contributions is *Najee Plays Songs From the Key of Life: A Tribute to Stevie Wonder* (EMI). The album pays its respects to Mr. Wonder without oddness, triviality, or reverence, and more often than not it's absurdly good. **NAJEE**, an alto sax man, conjures all kinds of pointed, acutely musical things. All these artists could have paid tribute to Stevie in their sleep—but didn't.

You've probably bounced along or changed lanes to **LA BOUCHE's** "Be My Lover" on the radio (it's on all the time)—but do you ever wonder exactly what gives the American expatriates *Sweet Dreams* (RCA)? Not quite as many loud, repetitive, German dance beats as you might imagine. Oh, those are all here, but the duo's mellifluous ballads, and some of the pop-R&B stuff, like "The Heat Is On" and "Shoo Be Do Be Do (I Like That Way)," are more reminiscent of ABBA than of Ace of Base.

But lotta bass or not, with their *We Got It* (MCA), **IMMATURE** remain promising boys. With ex-Bomb Squad member Hank Shocklee in charge of things, the young trio sport streetwise sounds and crafty hooks. What's missing is real songs. This crew need some melodies—which Tony Rich has a lot of.

Some people will happily go to the beach with music that ponders the life-and-death stuff



Deborah Cox

Najee

of angst-ridden winter evenings. For those folks there's **THE TONY RICH PROJECT's** *Words* (LaFace). Rich is a top-drawer writer/producer turned singer/songwriter who has taken Babyface's example brilliantly to heart. "Nobody Knows," Rich's first big hit, incorporates a strong whiff of the Jackson 5's 1970 "I'll Be There"

but turns it into a bolder portrayal of masculine insecurity. Other highlights include "Ghost" (an eerie look at intimacy) and "Leavin'," a beautifully bummed-out ode to how difficult splitting up can be sometimes. Especially during summer.

James Hunter



Immature

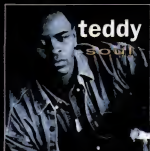


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READER RECORD REVIEW



TEDDY • *Soul* • Nôô Trybe

When old schoolers hear the name "Teddy," they instantly think of Teddy Pendergrass and songs like "Love TKO," "Close the Door" and "Turn Off the Lights." New jacks think of Teddy Riley, the man behind Guy's big hits. But

now there's a new Teddy, and his solo debut, *Soul*, features a mixture of quality ballads as well as more upbeat jams. The album blends the classic soul of the '70s with the bump 'n' grind rhythms of the '90s.

Highlights include "Never Be Over You," an almost a cappella love song; and hip hop heads might want to check "Are you in the mood" which co-stars Dru Down and the Luniz. Teddy pulls off a reggae-rop flavored cover of Michael Jackson's "Rock With You;" and "Ain't No Fun," which features H-Town's Dino is seductive and sincere at the same time. The harmonies here are smooth and definitely not overdone. This *Soul* is unquestionably Teddy's Jam.

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The Lost Boyz

Legal Drug Money Universal Records



Nineteen ninety-four was the year hip hop's party element was paralyzed—fallen into the abyss of high-tech weaponry and fashionable narcotics. Along came a crew from South Side Queens called the Lost Boyz with a single called "Keep It Real." Unlike the infinite other rappers claiming "realness," the Lost Boyz delivered authentic—not overblown—synopses of everyday life in their part of Queens.

Unfairly, the crew—Mr. Checks, Freaky Tah, Pretty Lou, and Spigg Nice—never received their due props. But in 1995 days were bounced off their feet by the Boyz' "Lifestyles of the Rich and Shameless." And soon after, the foursome rocked the Western Hemisphere with "Jeeps, Lex Coups, Bimaz & Benz."

This whirlwind-inducing song shot them to instant celeb status—leaving dance floors scuffed and turntable needles worn to the stub.

But after problems with their record company, Uptown Entertainment, the Lost Boyz were left in contractual limbo. Was it possible that the name of the group would be synonymous with their career? It seemed so for a moment. But finally, the Lost Boyz' full-length debut, *Legal Drug Money*, is here.

Legal Drug, like their first three singles, is a look into the daily life of the Lost Boyz. No Clock cooking here, y'all, just Mike rocking—and "Music Makes Me High" is the perfect example of that philosophy. Mr. Checks starts out, a cappella: "I represent the East Coast but..." and then Vaughn Mason and Crew's "Bounce, Rock, Skate, Roll" enters, and Checks picks back up with "Everywhere I go / I be gettin' down." This intro has more swerve than most rap songs. The title track, a story of how the Lost Boyz got to where they are, is another head nodder. The beat plays in reverse, and Freaky Tah's coarse bellowing fills the background like Cypress Hill's Sen Dog.

In a rap sea full of sharks feigning for budding-career blood, it once looked like the Lost Boyz were going to catch the big bite. But with the satisfying *Legal Drug Money*, these brothers back up everything they boast about in "Lifestyles of the Rich and Shameless" and answer that song's big question, "Who's the best / Who's the worst / In this hip hop game?" The Lost Boyz are strictly the best. *The Blackspot*

Nonchalant

Until the Day MCA

A product of our nation's capital, Nonchalant knows that just blocks away from the Oval Office there are rough streets where crime is a constant. Her first single, the powerful hit "5 O'Clock," stands out on *Until the Day* by dealing with neighborhood sicknesses like drug dealers and common disrespect. "It's not a white man's finger on the trigger," she cleverly asserts over an elegant bass line. "Carjacks, drive-bys calling each other nigga / I'm not here to scold / I'd rather shape and mold / A young black's mind / That won't live to grow old."

In the same socially conscious vein as "Lights & Sirens," a refreshing look at a tired topic: police brutality. "Non challenges Mr. Officer without hesitation. 'You writing tickets, I'm writing picket signs,' she shoots off. But when Day abandons this mindful agenda, Nonchalant becomes nonenjoyable.

As she eases into tales of romance, Non loses the snappy good sense that makes her special. She begins to sound like everybody else. "It's All Love" rings with MC Lyte's sexual aggression—but it sounds too much like Lyte. "Lookin' Good to Me," on the other hand, contains Salt-N-Pepa's you-make-me-wanna-shoop vibe.

It gets worse. In "Mr. Good Stuff," Nonchalant is on some gospel-y *Mama, I Want to Sing-type* stuff. Attempting to combine singing with her rapping, Nonchalant—unlike the Fugees' Lauryn Hill—comes off way more R&B than hip hop.

Although Nonchalant proves she can "kick a funky flow like a bowl of raw chittins," she sabotages what could have been an intelligent debut by spending too much time rapping (and singing) loudly while not saying much. Plus she seems not to care much about her subject matter once she gets away from the conscious stuff. Disappointingly, Nonchalant ends up epitomizing her name. *Elliot Wilson*



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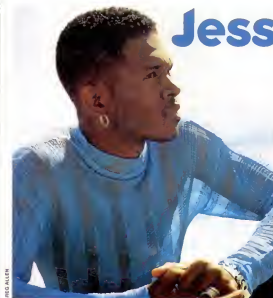
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NEG. ALSTM

Jesse Powell

Jesse Powell *Silas/MCA*

Jesse Powell's self-titled debut serves R&B straight-up—with no hip hop chaser. Filled with a mixture of classic and new songs, the collection beckons die-hard romantics to come and play with its pretty melodies and poignant lyrics.

On such mid-tempo cuts as "Ooh, I Like It" and "You Don't Know," Powell's voice caresses the lyrics like a subtly urgent lover. But while Powell's music and vocal delivery are consistently solid—especially on the cover of Enchantment's 1977 "Gloria," where he wisely makes few changes—he doesn't alter his flow much from song to song. Overall, though, Powell has created a luscious first album: love, heartache, sound musical arrangements, and sweet lyrics, all rendered with a welcome sense of delicacy. **Marcia Cole**

Marcia Cole

MC Ren The Villain in Black

Ruthless/Relativity

Yella **One Mo Nigga ta Go**
Street Life/Scotti Bros./All American Music

Street Life/Scotti Bros./All American Music

Whether you dwell in the East, the West, or somewhere in between, there are a few N.W.A facts no one can deny: Eazy-E had a gang of money, Ice Cube had a gang of lyrics, Dr. Dre had a gang of beats. And the crew sold a gang of records.

That was a decade ago, though, before the life-threats, lawsuits, intra-squads, dis songs, platinum-selling solo stints, and the AIDS-related death of Eazy-E. Now MC Ren, having survived the pandemonium, has dropped a thick-fisted second full-length solo disc, *The Villain in Me*. *Ren* is reminiscent of a time when gansta leans still began with a B-bo

In "Mad Scientist," Ren-as-villain kicks, "Looking in my crystal ball for competition / Hypocrite nig-gas hang around to get a listen / Tried to peep in my notebook but lost a leg / Got paralyzed up from what you read." There's enough beef in the rap industry to feed Somalia, and Ren refreshingly saves his disses for the police and fake MCs. Too bad guest MCs like J. Rocc, Above the Law, and Triggerman don't. Still reciting tired-ass gangsta tales, they bring an inexcusable hypocrisy to the Islamic message Ren's been preaching since his 1994 *Shock of the Hour*.

But all praises are due to the nasal-y bass line and snare-heavy cadence that make "I Don't Give a Damn" Villain's nicest track. Buttery vocals and a wicked pen help Ren break down shit he can definitely back up, like his hand in creating the G-funky flow. But what Villain needs more of are tracks that live up to Ren's mike skills. Maybe this is a job for Warren G? Or Dr. Dre?



And speaking of DJs turned producers, Yella is at last dropping his first solo project, *One Mo Nigga ta Go*, an informal "tribute" to Easy-E. But while "2T wo Face" and "Send 4 Me" feature vocals from the forceful MC Leicy Loc and the Teena Marie-ish Traci Nelson, respectively, it's the content of outdated street-life tales like "Dat's How I'm Livin" and "Streets Won't Let Me Go" that are disappointing. It's difficult to tell if *One Mo*—which features many more guests—is an actual album, a talent showcase, or just lots of wack music posing as a big Easy-E memorial. And if it's the latter, *One Mo Nigga ta Go's* lame lyrics are hauntingly unfortunate—they depict the type of behavior that took Easy away in the first place.

T.J. Lutz

T-Love



MC Ren

THE DOORS



Controlling Asbestos

[illegible]

Vernon Reid

Mistaken identity 550 Music

George Clinton

T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M. 550 Music

"You now know the future," declares one of the innumerable voices floating through *Mistaken Identity*, the outstanding solo debut from former Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid. The track is called "You Say He's Just a Psychic Friend," and the voice's nutty certainty about "predictions bound to come true" is just one of the charlatans ruses Reid lampoons.

Mistaken Identity is one of those rare albums that is both crammed full of ideas and instantly accessible. For starters, Reid assembled a monster band capable of just about anything—clarinetist Don Byron, keyboardist (the word hardly does him justice) Leon Gruenbaum, bassist Hank Schroy, drummer Curtis Watts, DJ Logic on turntables, and of course, Reid himself on guitars. Coproducing with Reid are jazz master Teo Macero, who worked with Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk, and Prince Paul, who helped create De La Soul's sonic collages.

Remarkably, *Mistaken Identity*'s achievement is far greater than the sum of those impressive parts. Despite Reid's fascination with words—found vocals, staged dialogue, and raps (by Chubb Rock, Beans, and Lady Apache)—this is essentially an instrumental album. Even the words work as sound and texture.

But Reid makes all his sounds mean something true, whether in his ongoing search for himself amid the definitions society tries to impose on him (the title track) or in a roaring tribute to a kindred seeker ("Saint Cobain"). And if none of that moves you, just listen to Reid blast on guitar like Jeff Beck just back from Mars—that alone will do.

Needless to say, Reid's adventurous genre bending owes a debt to George Clinton, who's been creating the future for more than three decades. Clinton provides the recipe on "Funky Kind (Gonna Knock It Down)": "Metal heavy and hip hop / Gangsta rappers oversamples of doo-wop / Funkin' with rock chops / Rockin' with funk chops."

This time out, Clinton heads back to the future with *T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M.* (the Awesome Power of a Fully Operational Mothership), evoking the grooves of early '70s funk, and bringing back on board such P-Funk all-stars as Bootsy Collins, Bernie Worrell, and Junie Morrison. The collaboration with Morrison generates the album's finest track, "Summer Swim," a perfect celebration of hot fun, or "booty show-and-tell," in the summertime. Clinton also renews his ties with the Hip Hop Nation, inviting Eric Sermon and MC Breed along for the album's slamming first single, "If Anybody Gets Funked Up (It's Gonna Be You)."

Wherever the Mothership lands, there's going to be a party. As for Reid, *Mistaken Identity* demonstrates that we're only beginning to learn what he's capable of. He's delivered a masterful, visionary, spinning kaleidoscope of an album.

Anthony DeCurtis



Vernon Reid



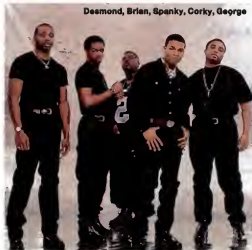
George Clinton

Men of Vizion

Personal MJJ

Today's masculine R&B is laden with Jokers who sing of little but freekin' girls—and then of keeping it on the down-low. But *Men of Vizion*'s refreshingly compassionate debut, *Personal*, doesn't use—or need—wordy descriptions of sex to get you in the mood or make you wanna dance. All 12 songs feature tight, bouncy production (most from the still gifted Teddy Riley) and the Brooklyn quintet sing confidently—there are no weak voices here. Suave songs like "House Keeper" and the title track have the most soul, but the rest stand up solidly. These visionaries are definitely a sound for sore ears.

Darryl Scipio



Desmond, Brian, Spanky, Corky, George

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White cotton boiler suit \$460 by JPG Paris from a selection at Saks and Neiman Marcus; black Campucci \$460 by Marc Murphy available at Fred Segal and Henri Bendel; sandals by Patrick Cox.

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Yellow nylon and polyester dress \$2,760 by Comme des Garçons available at Comme des Garçons, N.Y.C., and Susan, Burlingame, Calif.; gray nylon Chinese jacket \$200 and pants \$200, both by MNW Wardrobe from a selection available at Barney's New York, N.Y.C.; sunglasses by Diesel.

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(Top left) Petrol blue jacket \$500 and raincoat \$355, both by Joe Casey-Hayford available at Barney's New York; white down jacket \$45 by MNW Wardrobe; sandals by Lawler Duffy. (Top right) Golden orange suit \$635 by MNW Wardrobe; patent murren clogs by Patrick Cox, swimming cap by Speedo. (Bottom left) Cream raffia car coat \$655 by Marina Spadolova available at Bergdorf Goodman and Intermix; turquoise lava print jeans \$25 by Gucci available at Gucci stores; diamond studs by Lawler Duffy. (Bottom right) Shiny black jacket \$595 by JPG Paris available at Traffic, L.A., and Saks Fifth Avenue nationwide; mesh T-shirt \$55 by Jean Paul Gaultier available at Saks Fifth Avenue.

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Black belted trench coat \$85 by Marina Spadolova available at French Corner, N.Y.C., and Shauna Stern, L.A.; white cardigan \$270 and pants \$240, both by Marina Spadolova available at French Corner, N.Y.C., Bergdorf Goodman, N.Y.C., and Toby Lerner, Philadelphia; shoes by Patrick Cox, women's choker by Saks Stone, London (to order, call 01-77-994-1234).

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(Left) Body-pant suit \$355 by Jean Paul Gaultier, white NASA jacket \$50 by Daryl K. VEST available at Daryl K. N.Y.C., and Fred Segal; white fur bag by Gucci; swimming cap by Speedo. (Right) Blue blazer \$450 by MNW Wardrobe available from a selection at Barney's; white neoprene military coat \$75 by Jean Paul Gaultier.

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CREAM OF WHEAT green tunic dress \$450 by Joe Casey-Hayford available at Barney's New York; white top \$150 by Subculture available at Nordstrom; white mules and white rayon pant \$45, both by Patrick Cox available at Patrick Cox, N.Y.C. (212-759-3910); navy blue bag by Gucci; bracelet by Saks Stone, London (to order, call 01-77-994-1234).

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Fuchsia neoprene suit by Jean Paul Gaultier; sunglasses by Sold Out; shoes by Comme des Garçons.

VIBE® magazine (ISSN 1070-6700) is published monthly (except for combined December/January and June/July issues) by Time Publishing Ventures, Inc., Time & Life Bldg., Rockefeller Ctr., New York, NY 10020-1393. Jim Nelson, President & CEO; Barbara Kaczynski, Treasurer; Harry M. Johnston, Secretary. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to VIBE magazine, Box 99000, Boulder, CO 80522-9900. Regular subscription rate is \$11.95 per year. Foreign subscription rates are: Canada \$30.00; all other countries \$50.00 payable in advance in U.S. funds. GST# R12304309. Vol. 4, No. 5 Copyright © 1996 Time Publishing Ventures, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be copied or reproduced without permission from VIBE. Subscription requests, address changes, and adjustments should be directed to VIBE, Box 9950, Boulder, CO 80522-9950, or call 800-477-3976. Please print name and address clearly. VIBE cannot be responsible for unsolicited materials. VIBE is a trademark of Time Publishing Ventures, Inc.

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NO DOGS AND CHINESE ALLOWED, says a sign at the entrance to a park in Los Angeles. A guard standing at the gate blocks Bruce Lee's path. "You should see it first," Lee asks when a canine strolls into the park, led by a Jewish park dog walker on a leash. "Pretend you're a dog, and I'll take you in," offers a big smile. Only a few laughs. A few cracked skulls later, Lee KEE-YAA's the sign to pieces.

In this scene from *The Chinese Connection*, as in all of his movies, Lee played a bigger badass than Superfly or Shaft. The five-foot-seven, 165-pounder kept it real; perhaps too real. He got into so many street fights he got a bad rap. His father sent him to the U.S. at age 18 in 1959, but trouble followed him. He was the son of old-guard Asian-Americans who didn't approve of mixing with the new wave of outsiders (his first student was black). In order to keep his school, Lee had to defeat a local karate champion sent by the hostile Chinese community.

But he was a rebel with a cause. Onscreen, the inferiority complex (a common theme in karate movies)—was refuted by Lee by any means necessary. Defeating racism behind the scenes, however, wasn't so easy. He played a hero in roles like Kato on the '60s TV series *The Green Hornet*, and later, in the lead of *Kung Fu*—David Carradine got the part, despite Lee's return. He moved back to the U.S. after three huge Asian successes. He left Hollywood for Hong Kong. There, after three huge Asian successes, he left Hollywood for Hong Kong. There, after three huge Asian successes, he left Hollywood for Hong Kong. There, after three huge Asian successes, he left Hollywood for Hong Kong.

The climactic scene of *Enter the Dragon* finds Lee chasing a villain through a hall full of mirrors. As the Dragon stalks his prey, his defiant, battle-scarred image is reflected countless times in the glass. It is that image, extending around the world, that has helped transform Hollywood's perception of Asian actors from self-effacing Charlie Chan types into heroic leading men—empowering the Jackie Chans and John Woos, who today stand at the same threshold where Lee was when he died. Their success will be the ultimate tribute to his legacy.

Joseph V. Tirella

BRUCE LEE